

JAMES DOMINIC BRENT, OP



**THE  
FATHER'S  
HOUSE**

DISCOVERING OUR HOME  
IN THE TRINITY

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By James Dominic Brent, OP

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# NOTES

## Introduction

What has begun at the center of our souls is a new perception of the Presence, an awareness of divine Love, a true taste of first fruits from the new world to come. It tastes like “joy based on the truth.”

1. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), X.xxiii.33, 199.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Holy Trinity



## CHAPTER TWO

# To Be Jesus Christ

One of Pope Saint John Paul II's favorite sayings was that "Christ fully reveals man to man himself."

2. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, The Holy See, December 7, 1965, no. 22, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

We can see from this that *what* human beings are in essence, and what is good for us as humans, is a matter at least somewhat accessible to human reason and common sense.

3. More recently, the appeal to the reality of a higher law rationally accessible to all people was an essential part of the argument behind desegregation and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. See Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Even now, in the depths of our souls, we participate by grace in the life of the Holy Trinity.

4. In a sense, our bodies also participate the life of the Trinity by the overflow of grace from soul, but in quite a limited way so long as we are still in this life.

Doing so forms in the heart of the person a condition of *aversion from God*.

5. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 87, a. 4, resp.

A complete answer to the question requires a good moral catechesis, but a good place to start is a solid and approved examination of conscience.

6. For a brief guide to confession and an examination of conscience, see Fr. Bill Murphy, *Basic Helps to Confession* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2000).

But I feel my weakness, and I ask you to “clothe me with yourself,” to identify my soul with all the movements of your Soul, to overwhelm me, to possess me, to substitute yourself for me that my life may be but a radiance of your Life.

7. *The Complete Works of Elizabeth of the Trinity*, ed. Conrad de Meester, O.C.D., vol. 1, *I Have Found God*, trans. Sister Aletheia Kane, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1984), 183.

Consuming Fire, Spirit of Love, “come upon me,” and create in my soul a kind of incarnation of the Word: that I may be another humanity for Him in which He can renew his whole mystery.

8. *The Complete Works of Elizabeth of the Trinity*, 183.

“We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures, we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son Jesus.”

9. Saint John Paul II, Homily for World Youth Day, The Holy See, July 28, 2002, no. 5, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_20020728\\_xvii-wyd.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020728_xvii-wyd.html). For John Paul II, “to become the image of his Son” is to be Jesus in the sense we have sketched out over the course of the chapter.

Dear Jesus, help us to spread Your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with Your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of Yours. Shine through us and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel Your presence in our souls. Let them look up and see no longer us but only Jesus! Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as You shine, so to shine as to be a light to others; the light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be ours: it will be You shining on others through us. So let us thus praise You in the way You

love best: by shining on those around us. Let us preach You without preaching, not by words, but by our example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to You. Amen.

10. “Radiating Christ” was adapted from the original prayer written by Saint John Henry Newman in his book, *Meditations and Devotions*.

### CHAPTER THREE

## The Spirit of Love

“The single desire that dominated my search for delight was simply to love and to be loved,” said Saint Augustine.

11. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, II.ii.2, 24.

The more profound is the lack of love, the more profound are the disorders.

12. Charles A. Nelson, Nathan A. Fox, and Charles H. Zeanah, *Romania’s Abandoned Children: Deprivation, Brain Development, and the Struggle for Recovery* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2014). The topic belongs to the field of attachment theory. For a thorough overview of the field, see Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver, eds., *Handbook of Attachment*, 3rd. ed. (New York & London: The Guilford Press, 2016). Conrad Baars and Anna Terruwe also speak extensively to the question. See their book *Healing the Unaffirmed: Recognizing Emotional Deprivation Disorder* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 2002).

A vast body of research also shows that human beings have an innate felt need to *belong*, and people who lack a sense of belonging also tend to suffer from a variety of disorders.

13. Two pioneers of research on belonging were R. F. Baumeister & M.R. Leary. See “The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation,” *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 3 (1995): 497–529.

Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.

14. Pope Saint John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, The Holy See, March 4, 1979, no. 22, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_04031979\\_redemptor-hominis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html)

One of the most amazing and life-transforming announcements anyone could ever hear is that “the love of God has been poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5).

15. Translation by author.

So, too, are all the good words and kindly deeds of all the people in the Church who bear the Spirit of the living God in their hearts.

16. It is also important to acknowledge that, in one way or another, all of us also experience the sinfulness of various members of the Church. Many people have been hurt either by ministers or by others in the Church. When we experience love and kindness from the members of the Church, it is a gift and sign of God’s love. When we experience sin and hurt from members of the Church, however, it is obviously not from God. As will be explained in Chapter Four, every human being suffers from a certain illness or pathos of the heart and stands in need of healing and renewal by grace. So, too, with all the members of the Church—including the ministers.

The Church is the “home and the school of *communio*.”

17. Pope Saint John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, The Holy See, January 6, 2001, no. 43, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_20010106\\_novo-millennio-ineunte.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html).

“All who cling to the Lord become one spirit with him”  
(1 Cor 6:17).

18. Translation by author.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Pathos of the Heart

We commonly lack the traits of the friends of God and his adopted children: “*parrhesia*, straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved” (CCC 2778).

19. *Parrhesia* is a Greek word that means the ability to speak freely or boldly. In this context, it means the ability to speak freely with God based on the confidence that one is accepted and loved.

Thanks to the grace given to each of us in Baptism, Jesus Christ himself is now the “hidden man of the heart” (1 Pet 3:4)

20. Translation by author.

In this broad sense, Pope Saint John Paul II said that the heart is the “inward mystery of man.”

21. Pope Saint John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 8.

For thanks to Baptism, God dwells in our hearts by grace and is always available for us.

22. A qualification is important: the Presence remains within the interior sanctuary of the soul so long as one is living in a state of grace. Mortal sin destroys the grace of the indwelling, but for those who are baptized, the sacrament of Penance restores it.

Saint Diadochos of Photiki calls the interior nave *the area around the heart*.

23. Saint Diadochos of Photike, “On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination” in *The Philokalia*, trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, vol. 1 (New York: Faber & Faber, 1979), 263; *One Hundred Practical Texts of Perception and Spiritual Discernment from Diadochos of Photiki*, trans. Janet Elaine Rutherford (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 2000); “Introductory,” St Diadochos of Photiki, Gnostic Chapters, December 24, 2011, <http://timiosprodromos8.blogspot.com>. The Palmer translation refers to what is within the person but “outside the heart” and the Rutherford translation translates the same expression more literally as “the area around the limbs of the heart.”

Archimandrite Zacharias calls the interior sanctuary *the deep heart*.

24. Archimandrite Zacharias, *The Hidden Man of the Heart: The Cultivation of the Heart in Orthodox Christian Anthropology*, ed. Christopher Veniamin (Dalton, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2008), 1.

The deep heart is able to behold God by grace because it has eyes all of its own, sometimes called the *intellect* or *nous*.

25. The eyes of the heart are commonly called *intellect* in western theology and *nous* in eastern theology.

The eyes of the heart were thus made for the contemplation of God—for contemplative prayer in this life and for the unveiled sight of God in the next.

26. Contemplative prayer will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

For God originally established them in a special state of grace.

27. The account of the original condition and fall of human beings laid out in this section and the following is based upon several authorities. First, Saint Thomas Aquinas’s summary and synthesis of the Fathers of the Church. *Summa Theologiae* I, qs. 93–102; *Disputed Questions on Truth*, q. 181;

*Compendium of Theology*, c. 186–197. Second, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 355–421 as well as *Christ Our Pascha: Catechism of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church* (Kyiv and Edmonton, 2016), nos. 118–177 and 725–801. Third, like the latter sections of *Christ Our Pascha*, it draws its overall vision and inspiration from monastic authors common to the East and West regarding our overall condition as fallen and the purpose of the spiritual journey as one of healing and transformation of the heart where the image of God is primarily to be found in us and renewed by grace. For one example, see Saint John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York; Newman Press, 1997); Saint Diadochus of Photike, “On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination: One Hundred Texts,” in *The Philokalia*, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, vol. 1 (New York: Faber & Faber, 1979).

Prayerfulness was the original condition of the human heart.

28. Fabio Giardini, O.P. defines prayerfulness as a loving awareness of the presence of God. See his *Prayerfulness: A Psychotheological Search into the Spirit of Prayer* (Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1984).

The first human beings had other forms of knowledge and love too, but all other forms of knowledge and love were integrated into prayerfulness.

29. I say that all other forms of knowledge were integrated into prayerfulness, since they lived in the state of grace and so enjoyed the Spirit’s gift of wisdom in some way. Prayerfulness (in Giardini’s sense) is essentially the contemplative act of the Spirit’s gift of wisdom, and the Spirit’s gift of wisdom holds the primacy over theological and philosophical wisdom, and, by implication, all the lower sciences too. See Pope Saint John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 44.

In the Church of the West, there is the list of the seven deadly sins: gluttony, lust, greed, wrath, *acedia* (despondency), envy, and vanity.

30. The term *sloth* is a translation of the Latin term *acedia*, but the

contemporary sense of the term *sloth* renders it a poor translation. *Acedia* is a much larger phenomenon, and sloth in the sense of laziness is but one related offspring or symptom. A better translation of *acedia* is despondency.

The “thoughts of the flesh,” he says, “are death” (Rom 8:6).

31. Translation by author.

Saint Catherine of Siena, for example, was once subjected to a relentless bombardment of lustful thoughts of horrible and vile forms for days, but not once did she consent to any of them.

32. Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine*, trans. Conleth Kearns (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1980), 98–99.

There she “lived as a hermit, praying, entrusting to the Lord all the people she met, all the people who came to meet her, all the people who came to seek refuge with her and asked her for help.”

33. “In Saint Baume,” Le Sanctuaire de la Sainte-Baume, <https://provence-alpes-cotedazur.com/en/things-to-do/culture-and-heritage/monuments/sainte-baume-cave/>. To this day, the Grotto of Saint Mary Magdalene stands in the mountains of southern France at the Sanctuaire de la Sainte-Baume. The Dominican Fathers have been the custodians of her relics in that place since 1295 and receive many pilgrims.

He answered: “in your heart.”

34. Raymond of Capua, *Life of Catherine*, 101.

One prayer of the Mass goes like this: “O God, to whom every heart lies open, every desire speaks plainly, and from whom no secret is hidden, cleanse we pray the *thoughts* of our heart by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. . . .”

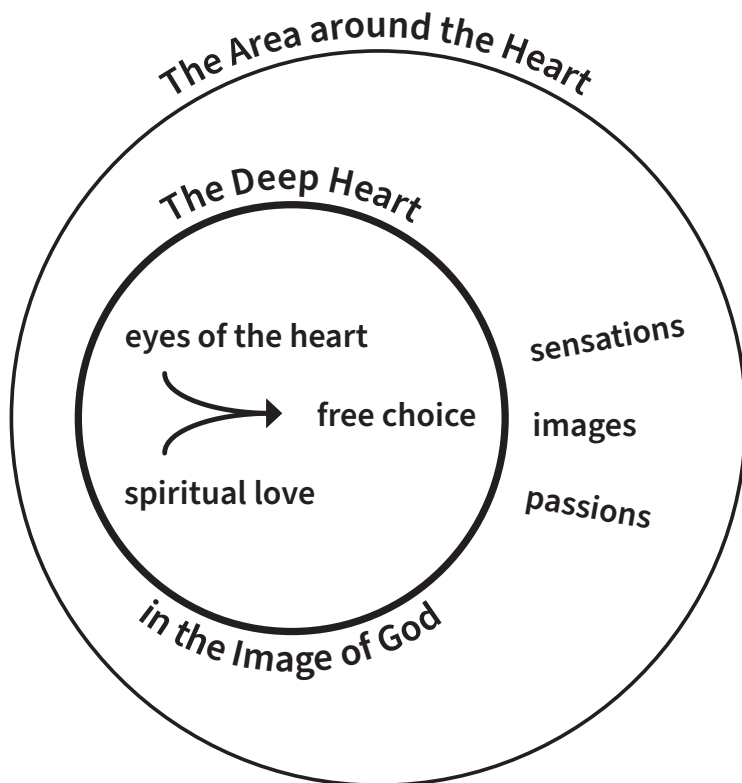
35. "Opening Collect, Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit (B)," in the *Roman Missal*, 3rd typical ed. (Totowa, New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing, 2021), 1186.

Another says: "Pour your grace into our hearts, we pray, O Lord, that we may constantly be drawn away from *unruly desires*. . . ."

36. "Opening Collect, Friday of the Third Week of Lent," in the *Roman Missal*, 3rd typical ed., 104.

Finally, when lighting the paschal candle at the Easter Vigil, the priest says: "May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds."

37. "Vigil in the Night," in the *Roman Missal*, 3rd typical ed., 200.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# The Practicals of the Way

*Hear*, it says. For “faith comes from what is heard” (Rom 10:17), and “faith,” according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, “is the foundation of the entire spiritual edifice.”

38. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, d. 23, q. 2, q.1, a.1, ad 1.

According to one ancient etymology of the word, common among the rabbis as well as the Fathers of the Church, *Israel* means “mind beholding God.”

39. James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983–85), 703. For only one example of the Fathers using this etymology, see Pseudo-Macarius, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies and The Great Letter*, trans. George Maloney, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 234: “Israel is interpreted as being the mind contemplating God.”

According to Saint John of the Cross, faith is what really establishes someone in union with God.

40. Karol Wojtyła, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, trans. Jordan Aumann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 33.

“Believe in his love for you,” said Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity, “in his exceeding Love.”

41. *The Complete Works of Elizabeth of the Trinity*, 128.

Saint Thomas Aquinas interprets it as follows.

42. *Summa Theologiae* II–II, q. 45, a. 4 and a. 5.

Watchfulness, wakefulness, and prayerfulness are not marginal or transitory matters in the spiritual life.

43. The presentation of vigilance here, especially understanding of it in terms of awareness, resistance, and eradication of *logismoi*, is based upon *Christ Our Pascha: Catechism of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church*, nos. 752–754, 796–7988.

“You will never be commonplace,” said Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity, “if you are vigilant in love.”

44. *The Complete Works of Elizabeth of the Trinity*, 180.

One of the most comprehensive Scripture studies of charity ever composed is by the scholar Ceslas Spicq.

45. Ceslas Spicq, O.P., *Agape in the New Testament*, trans. Sister Marie Aquinas McNamara and Sister Mary Honoria Richter, 3 vols. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book, 1963–66). For a condensed version of his account of charity, see Ceslas Spicq, O.P., *Charity and Liberty in the New Testament* (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1965).

According to the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, charity brings with it a certain good-will, mercy, and beneficence toward all people, even sinners, but in practice charity loves those people who are in fact known and nearest to us according to a certain order of proximity.

46. *Summa Theologiae* III, qs. 25 & 26, 30 & 31.

The practical takeaway comes to this: “Do good to all, but especially those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).

47. Translation by author.

## CHAPTER SIX

# The Beatitudes

The order of the Beatitudes is well worth noting. For they form a sequence of lessons to learn and steps to take in following Jesus Christ.

48. Saint Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Denis J. Kavanagh, O.S.A. (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1951). According to Saint Augustine, the Sermon on the Mount summarizes the whole teaching of Jesus Christ, and the Beatitudes more specifically are a complete list of the essential lessons to learn, steps to take, and stages to pass through on the way to union and identification with Jesus Christ. For Augustine, in addition to the law of love, the Beatitudes chart the whole course you and I must walk as disciples of Jesus Christ in order to become like him. For more on the sequence of the Beatitudes, see the sources cited in fn. 47.

An honest acknowledgment of our weaknesses, our limitations, and our radical need for God is, in fact, the very place to begin.

49. The following meditations on the Beatitudes are based on Augustine's *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I–II q. 69; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*, trans. John Henry Newman, vol. 1 (London: Saint Austin Press, 1997), 145–160; Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *The Lord's Prayer & The Beatitudes*, trans. Hilda C. Graef. (London: Longman's, Green, 1954); Ambrose Gardeil, O.P., *The Holy Spirit in the Christian Life* (St. Louis: Herder, 1954); Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), ch. 6; Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *Happiness God's Way: Living the Beatitudes*, trans. Sister Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. (Alba House, 1998); Jacques Philippe, *The Way of Trust and Love: A Retreat Guided by St. Therese of Lisieux*, trans. Helena Scott (New York, Scepter: 2012); Jacques Philippe, *The Eight Doors of the Kingdom* (New York: Scepter, 2018).

According to Saint John Climacus, in fact, humility is the destroyer of *all* disordered passions.

50. Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2019), 180.

Walking away and living differently, however, ordinarily require a tearful break with “the sweets of folly.”

51. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, IX.i.1, 155.

Recent popes have urged the revival of fasting even outside the season of Lent.

52. Pope Saint Paul VI, *Paenitimini*; Pope Saint John Paul II in multiple forms: General Audience, March 21, 1979 ([https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1979/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_19790321.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19790321.html)) & Angelus, March 10, 1996 ([https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/angelus/1996/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_ang\\_19960310.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/angelus/1996/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19960310.html)); Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent, 2009 ([https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/len/2009/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20081211\\_lent-2009.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/len/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20081211_lent-2009.html)).

The topic of forgiveness deserves a special discussion all its own, especially for those who have been gravely injured by others.

53. For a brief, powerful, and practical guide to forgiveness, see Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J., *To Forgive is Divine* (DeGrandis Publishing, 1981).

Having learned meekness, Elizabeth herself went on to become one of the greatest masters of contemplative prayer of all time.

54. See Joanne Mosley, *Elizabeth of the Trinity: The Unfolding of Her Message*, vol. 1, *In the World & In Community* (Oxford: Teresian Press, 2012), chs. 1 and 2.

The traditional list of corporal and spiritual works of mercy still stands.

55. The seven corporal works of mercy are: 1. Feed the hungry, 2. Give drink to the thirsty, 3. Clothe the naked, 4. Visit the imprisoned, 5. Shelter the homeless, 6. Visit the sick, 7. Bury the dead. The seven spiritual works of mercy are: 1. Admonish the sinner, 2. Instruct the ignorant, 3. Counsel the doubtful, 4. Comfort the sorrowful, 5. Bear wrongs patiently, 6. Forgive all injuries, 7. Pray for the living and the dead. See CCC 2447.

One example of mercy is the American woman Rose Hawthorne.

56. Her cause for canonization is now underway, and she is presently a Venerable.

One of the desert Fathers, Abba Moses, said that the pure heart has all the elements of love enumerated in 1 Corinthians 13.

57. Saint John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (New York: Newman Press, 1997), 45.

Her tenderness and compassion were incomparable, and so too was her contemplative prayer

58. In *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope Saint John Paul II offers a profound reflection on Mary's contemplation (See no. 10).

For Jesus Christ himself is "the hidden man of the heart" in each of the baptized (1 Pet 3:4).

59. Translation by author.

"Be at peace with yourself, and heaven and earth will be at peace with you," said Saint Isaac of Nineveh.

60. Isaac of Nineveh, *On Ascetical Life*, trans. Mary Hansbury (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 34.

Even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified . . . and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed.

61. Pope Saint Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, The Holy See, December 8, 1975, no. 22, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html)

“To us also, your servants, who though sinners, hope in your abundant mercies, graciously grant some share and fellowship with your holy Apostles and Martyrs: John the Baptist, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, and all your Saints.”

62. “Eucharistic Prayer I (The Roman Canon),” in *The Roman Missal*, 3rd typical ed. (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing, 2021), 494.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Father’s House

He was a Jewish man speaking to other Jewish men, and in their minds the expression *father’s house* had a rich and definite meaning.

63. The following meditations on Jewish family life are based on the following sources: Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961); C.J.H. Wright,

“Family,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. Noel Freedman, vol. 2, D-G (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 761–779; J. Daane, “Father,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 284–286; J. E. Hartley, “Father’s House,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 286–287; Paul W. Miller, *Calling God “Father”: Essays on the Bible, Fatherhood, and Culture* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

In ancient Hebrew, there were words for aunt and uncle, but the words for brother and sister extended to both immediate siblings and cousins, and there was not even a word for the latter.

64. See Wright, “Family,” 762.

According to various experts, among the ancient Jews “fathers came to be involved with their families and their children to a degree unparalleled in other cultures.”

65. Miller, *Calling God “Father”*, 70.

Biblical scholars speculate about how the experience of fatherhood in Israel came to be so different from that of surrounding cultures, and some answer that the ritual and ceremony of Israel forged a bond between fathers and sons as they did nowhere else.

66. See Miller, ch. 6.

Some scholars surmise how the redemption ceremony might have gone based on how it goes today.

67. See Miller, 58–60. Special thanks also to Tom McCreech, O.P., Professor of Old Testament at Providence College, and Steven Ryan, O.P., Professor of Old Testament at the Dominican House of Studies, for their enlightening remarks about the redemption of the firstborn in ancient Israel.

In Hebrew, the only expression referring to family is *father's house*.

68. Wright, "Family," 761–779.

When standing before Pilate, Jesus said to him, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36).

69. Translation by author.

"To ransom a slave, you gave away your Son."

70. "The Easter Proclamation (Exsultet)," in the *Roman Missal*, 3rd typical ed. (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing, 2021), 208.

Given God's desire to save all, and the responsibility of all people before him, the Church teaches that in his mercy God gives to all people grace sufficient for their salvation, even if in many cases the manner in which he does so is known only to himself.

71. "Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.5 as quoted in CCC 1260. cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16; *Ad Gentes*, no. 7).

Those who in this life accepted the grace of God, repented of all their sins, and had God as their first love above all things—at least at the moment of death—shall pass through their particular judgment without condemnation and go into the Father's House.

72. On the way into the Father's House they shall pass through purgatory as well *unless* all the temporal consequences of their sins have first been remedied through suitable penance or indulgences. Purgatory, penances, and indulgences, however, are topics deserving a fuller explanation elsewhere.

Repentance is not possible after death, but only in this life.

73. According to the teaching of the Church, the opportunity for repentance belongs to this life only. There is no second chance after death. CCC 1021: “Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ.”

through the particular judgment of each person, God shall adequately settle the question of justice regarding all the free choices of all people of all times and places of history and render to all according as their deeds deserve (see Rom 2:6; Rev 22:12).

74. God shall also address sin, and the whole problem of evil generally, through the second coming of Christ, the general judgment, and the final purification of the world at the end, but the mysteries of the end deserve another treatment all their own.

Grace, in the primary sense of the term, is God’s gift of himself to us. Grace in this sense is God saying, “I am yours.”

75. See CCC 1999 and 2003.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# The Mystery of Filial Adoption

The most intimate prayer of the heart of Jesus began welling up in their own hearts too: “You have received the Spirit of sonship through which *we* cry ‘*Abba!*’” (Rom 8:15, emphasis added).

76. Translation by author.

## Conclusion

They are unaccustomed to hear someone speak of the great *communio* of the Church in which “the love of God has been poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5).

77. Translation by author.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### CHAPTER ONE

#### The Holy Trinity

1. How did I understand the purpose of my life before reading the chapter? Had I ever heard or thought about the connection between the question of my life’s purpose and the mystery of the Holy Trinity?
2. How do I understand the purpose of life now after reading the chapter? Does the invitation to enter the Holy Trinity attract me? Why or why not?
3. How often do I think of the Holy Trinity throughout my day? How can I integrate meditation on the Trinity more into my daily life and prayers?
4. Which symbols in Rublev’s icon of the Trinity were most illuminating?
5. How might I respond differently in the future to the claim that the Trinity is “just a mystery”?

## CHAPTER TWO

### To Be Jesus Christ

1. How did I understand my identity before reading this chapter? Did I ever previously connect the topic of identity with my Baptism?
2. How do I now understand my identity after reading this chapter? Does the invitation to union and identification with Jesus Christ appeal to me? Why or why not?
3. Upon hearing *you are Jesus*, what was my initial reaction: Wonder? Concern? Something else? Did any of the hesitations listed in this chapter resonate with me? Why or why not? How can I bring this reaction into my prayer life?
4. Do I think of my life as being one with the life of Jesus Christ? For example, do I ever think of my love for God as Jesus Christ's love for God burning in my own heart? Do I ever think of my sufferings as his sufferings? What might I do to remember such things in daily life? How might I pray with them to grow in union with Jesus?
5. What were the most difficult or challenging points in the chapter for me personally? What were the most enlightening or encouraging?

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Spirit of Love

1. What was my answer to the love question before reading this chapter? Did I ever connect the love question in my own heart with the Spirit of Love poured into our hearts at Baptism?
2. What is my answer to the love question now after reading the chapter? Does faith in the Spirit of Love make a difference in how I answer the question? Why or why not?
3. How have I experienced the Spirit of Love at work in my own heart and life? When have I been drawn to faith in Jesus Christ? In what ways?
4. Do I think of myself as a friend of God? Why or why not? If not, then how do I think of my relationship with God? How might that change after reading this chapter?
5. Have I experienced the Spirit of Love and *communio* in the Church? In what ways? Have I experienced disappointment and hurt in the Church? How have I reacted? After reading this chapter, has the way I see the Church changed? How so?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Pathos of the Heart

1. Have I ever thought of the following of Jesus Christ on the way of friendship as a path to the healing of my heart? Does doing so change how I understand Christianity? How so?
2. How did I think of the human heart before reading the chapter? How do I think of it after reading the chapter?
3. Does the description of the pathos of the heart in this chapter resonate with my own experience? In what ways?
4. Do I ever think that my sins or disordered thoughts define me? Why or why not? Does the distinction between the deep heart and the area around the heart, as well as the distinction between voluntary and involuntary *logismoi*, change how I understand myself? How so?
5. How does learning about the pathos of the heart change how I understand other people in the Church? How might it change my response to them?

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Practicals of the Way

1. Have I experienced for myself how consistent practice of the Catholic faith can make a difference for the better in my life? Has it made a difference for the better in the lives of people whom I know? In what ways?
2. Have I ever thought of the following of Christ as a process of recovery for the eyes of my heart so that I might know the love of God more and more? In what ways must I change to keep the eyes of my heart more fixed on Jesus?
3. How did the discussion of the pathos of the heart in the previous chapter illuminate my interpretation of the law of love in this chapter? In which way do I find it most difficult to love God above all: with my heart, mind, soul, or strength?
4. Are there ways I can better practice the takeaways that go with the law of love? How might I better believe in God's love for me, watch at all times and pray, or do good to all?
5. What difference would it make to my understanding of morality if I thought of all moral laws and teachings as a light for the heart rather than simply as imposed obligations?

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Beatitudes

1. How did I understand the Beatitudes before reading this chapter? How do I understand them now after reading it?
2. If the Beatitudes depict the countenance of Christ and portray his charity, what should they mean to a disciple of Jesus Christ? If the Beatitudes are a summary of steps or a formation program for becoming another Christ in the world, what place do they have in discipleship? What place do they presently have in my own personal walk with the Lord?
3. Which Beatitude appeals the most to my own heart at present? Which one do I find most challenging to practice at present?
4. Which explanation of the Beatitudes was the most surprising? Which spoke to me the most? Which example or lesson from the lives of the saints was most inspirational? Why?
5. How might I better ponder the Beatitudes, pray for the grace of the Beatitudes, and practice the Beatitudes in my daily walk with Jesus Christ?

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Father's House

1. How has my experience of human fatherhood affected my understanding of the eternal Father?
2. Has this chapter changed my understanding of what fatherhood is? Has it changed my understanding of the heavenly Father? How so?
3. Do the five roles of fathers in ancient Israel speak to the role of fathers today? In what ways?
4. Has the mystery of the Father's House in heaven touched my own life on earth? In what ways?
5. What were the most illuminating points in the chapter? What were the most challenging?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Mystery of Filial Adoption

1. How does hearing about the mystery of my own filial adoption in Baptism affect my relationship with God? How does it affect my understanding of my prayer life?
2. Does the call to contemplative prayer draw me? Have I already experienced the Presence of God in my life in some ways? In what ways?
3. Is the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist easy or hard to believe in? Why?
4. Have I ever thought of the Eucharist as something from the Father's House in the heavenly places actually present here on the earth? Have I ever thought of my prayer in the Mass, or Divine Liturgy, as a participation in Jesus' prayer and offering to the Father? What difference could it make in my life to think in this way?
5. Has the book as a whole changed my answers to the three questions? Has it changed how I plan to live? If so, how?

## Prayer to the Holy Trinity

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to forget myself entirely that I may be established in You as still and as peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing trouble my peace or make me leave You, O my Unchanging One, but may each minute carry me further into the depths of Your Mystery. Give peace to my soul; make it Your heaven, Your beloved dwelling and Your resting place. May I never leave You there alone but be wholly present, my faith wholly vigilant, wholly adoring, and wholly surrendered to Your creative Action.

O my beloved Christ, crucified by love, I wish to be a bride for Your Heart; I wish to cover You with glory; I wish to love You . . . even unto death! But I feel my weakness, and I ask You to “clothe me with Yourself,” to identify my soul with all the movements of Your Soul, to overwhelm me, to possess me, to substitute Yourself for me that my life may be but a radiance of Your Life. Come into me as Adorer, as Restorer, as Savior. O Eternal Word, Word of my God, I want to spend my life in listening to You, to become wholly teachable that I may learn all from You. Then, through all nights, all voids, all helplessness, I want to gaze on You always and remain in Your great light. O my beloved Star, so fascinate me that I may not withdraw from Your radiance.

O consuming Fire, Spirit of Love, “come upon me,” and create in my soul a kind of incarnation of the Word: that I may be another humanity for Him in which He can renew His whole Mystery. And You, O Father, bend lovingly over Your poor little creature; “cover her with Your shadow,” seeing in her only the “Beloved in whom You are well pleased.”

O my Three, my All, my Beatitude, infinite Solitude, Immensity in which I lose myself, I surrender myself to You as Your prey. Bury Yourself in me that I may bury myself in You until I depart to contemplate in Your light the abyss of Your greatness.

SAINT ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

+ November 21, 1904