

# The Story of Life in the Trinity

Trinity Sunday, June 16, 2019

In the Fishlake National Forest in Utah, there is a beautiful grove of a kind of aspen tree called "Pando." Pando means "I spread out" in Latin. And they have spread out nicely, occupying over 100 acres of the forest, together weighing over 6 million kilograms. But the most amazing thing about this Pando grove, scientists tell us, is that these trees are actually **not** separate, individual trees at all. They are all genetically identical. They are in fact, scientists have determined, **one** single organism, with **one** massive underground root system. The root system is estimated to be 80,000 years old, and thus it's among the oldest living organisms on the planet. And since all 6 million kilograms of it are actually **one tree**, it is the heaviest known organism on earth. All of it emerging from a **single seed**. It spreads by sending up new shoots from its ever-expanding root system. It's quite amazing.

We have a wisdom tradition. It is an ancient one. It promises to guide us through the lifelong process of becoming truly wise and truly loving. It contains many sacred teachings (or what we call "doctrines.") If we only **named** each of these sacred teachings this morning (never mind **reflecting** on them), we would quickly run out of time. But fortunately, the many sacred teachings of our wisdom tradition, like the many trees of the Pando forest, all stem from a single seed:

*We were created **from** Love, to live **in** Love, and **to** Love.*

In technical terms we call it "the doctrine of the Trinity." All of the particular teachings & practices & values & experiences of our faith are **offshoots** of this single seed.

So it is important that we inwardly reflect on the Mystery of the Trinity. We will never exhaust its meaning, never "master" it, but we need a good working understanding of how the Trinity is at play in the midst of all the ups & downs of our daily lives.

We need to go beyond Sunday School understandings, such as "*The Trinity is like a hard boiled egg -- you know, there is the shell, and the yolk, and the white part -- but it's all one egg.*" That **is** "an understanding" of sorts, but not one that will give us much *wisdom for living*. We need an understanding of the Trinity that transcends our ordinary ways of thinking, dramatically alters our point of view, and enables us to love God & ourselves & one another more deeply and truly in our daily lives.

The challenge is -- as Jesus tells his disciples (John 16:12-15) -- that we cannot **bear** such an understanding. It is too vast. Our horizons are not broad enough to take it

in. It is the **one** Truth that contains **all** truths. But Jesus tells us, through the mysterious influence of the Holy Spirit on our hearts and minds, our horizons can be expanded, expanded enough for the Life of the Trinity to become intelligible to us.

## The Story

This is an imaginative story. And so, we need to listen to it a bit like we would listen to a "fairy tale" -- temporarily suspending our judgment, so that we can enter into the world of the story and glean the truths it has to offer us. At the same time, it is a very "*adult*" story. And so, the real challenge is to listen to it with the mind of a child, *without forgetting* that you are actually an adult. It's quite a challenge. But if we just sit back, open our hearts and minds, and listen to the words, the Holy Spirit will help us to meet the challenge.

Like many good stories, this one has a Beginning, a Middle, and an End. I will only tell you the Beginning this morning. But I'll attach some reflections on the Middle and the End in the printed copy if you are interested in reflecting further.

## The Beginning

The Beginning of the story sometimes gets glossed over. Sometimes it is not told at all. But without the Beginning, there really is no story at all. The Middle and the End don't quite make sense. But once we grasp the thread that is handed to us in the Beginning, we can follow it throughout the Middle and the End. Then the wisdom of the whole story, and of our place within it, becomes clear to us.

In the Beginning, we are told several very unusual things:

- \* We're told that there is "nothing." There are "no things," no physical things at all. We might imagine "the Beginning" as a completely clear and endless space in which there are absolutely no things.
- \* But there is One, One who is not a thing. One who has no physical properties whatsoever. One who is not "*a being*" like we ordinarily think of, but Being Itself.
- \* And it's fortunate that this was long before there was ever a "mathematics" like we understand it now, because we are told something about this **One** that just doesn't "add up." We are told that within this **One** there are **Three**. There are **Three** who are **One** with each other.

- \* Each of these Three are separate, distinct, unique. But they are of One Mind, One Heart, One Will. We're told that they are "a Community In Unity," and that they are "a Community of Love."
- \* And the Love between these Three is what we might nowadays call truly "mature." It is a Love in which they each recognize & accept one other as they are. A Love in which they **respect** that *each one* has their own centre -- that *neither one* is merely an "extension" of another. In this Love, they **listen** to one another, without the desire to compete or control, only with the desire to understand. They **speak** to one another in self-revealing ways, without any hidden agendas, for nothing between them is hidden. So they are an Honest Community. The Love they share is also humble, it does not "insist on its own way," but is open to mutual discovery and change. They are a truly Flexible Community and a truly Creative Community. The nature of their Love, we are told, is that they don't just "have" it, like we can "have" a *thing*; instead, they "are" it. Their Love does not come and go. They are Love itself. And so, they are a truly Stable Community and a truly Safe Community, a community which is always cohesive and in which mutual trust (or "faith") is always engendered, a community in which there is never violence or harm of any kind.
- \* Next, we're told that this Community of Love has **always been**, from **before** (what we usually think of as) "the beginning", from **before** the foundations of the world, **before** there was ever a cosmos, a universe, a planet earth, before time and space began. Back when there were "no things." They have always been. They always **are**. And always **will be**.
- \* And then, lastly, we are told the strangest thing of all. We are told that **we** (each one of us) were "**there**," within their Inner Circle of Love, within their Mind, within their Heart. We are told that within **Them** is where our lives actually began. Before conception, before we were ever in our mothers' wombs, before there ever was a world, as such. We were all **there** within the Loving Mind of God, way back when -- *materially speaking* -- we were all still "nothing."
- \* Now knowing this about ourselves can make us feel deeply special, and rightly so. But lest we start feeling "too special", we learn that it is not only **we** who were **there**, within the Loving Mind of God -- so was every blade of grass, every chipmunk, every star, every subatomic particle. And yet, mysteriously, Their Divine attention and Care is not somehow "divided" between us all. As strange as it may sound, each *individual member* of the family -- even each individual blade of grass

-- gets The Trinity's *full* and *undivided* and *loving* attention. Each one gets God "all to himself", or "herself", or "itself."

- \* This is the Beginning of the story. It is the first Mystery of our faith: That our **true** "Beginning" was actually **before** what we usually think of as "the beginning." Before there ever was a Creation, a physical world and all the things in it, we had a **life**, we had a **home**, within the Heart & Mind of the Trinity, within the perfection of their love and wisdom. And (as we'll soon hear in the Middle of the story), deep within that part of us which **still** has no physical properties (what tradition calls our souls), we each have something like a "memory" of this, a "memory" of our First Home within Their Love.

## The Middle

- \* It is good and important for us to think & reflect on the Beginning of the story. But if we **only** reflect on the Beginning, we can become **so** "heavenly minded" that we're of little earthly good to ourselves and others. To stay (more or less) in balance, we need to take in the **whole** story -- the Beginning, the Middle, and the End.
- \* The Middle of the story begins with what tradition calls Creation. It begins with how, out of nothing, out of that clear, endless space which has no physical properties whatsoever, the Love of the Trinity creates form, physical space and time, and all the "creatures" within it (including ourselves, all the blades of grass, subatomic particles, and so on.) Each of these countless creatures, we remember, already has a life within the Mind of God. But having a material existence was something altogether new, and, to say the least, a "major life transition."
- \* The first principle of Creation is that it is the Life of the Trinity that gives life to all created things (or "creatures"), and not simply "in a flash," but in an ongoing way. Creatures, in other words, do not have their own independent, autonomous, self-contained source of life. They are wholly dependent upon the Life of the Trinity. They "live and move and have their being" in the Life of the Trinity, whether they are conscious of this reality or not. Without this vital connection, they would have no life at all. But the connection is never severed, and so creatures do have life, life from God, even if they might believe themselves to be autonomous.
- \* This absolute dependence of creatures upon the Divine is mirrored in more highly evolved creatures in the dependence of infants upon their caregivers. There is not a mutuality of need in these relationships. The caregiver does not need the infant

in order to live. The infant, however, cannot live without the caregiver. The analogy, built into Creation, points us toward the relationship of the Trinity to all creatures. Our relationship with the Trinity is not an "inter-dependent" one, like the kind that flows between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. God does not need us to sustain God's Life, for God is Life *as such*, Life itself. Rather, it is a relation of absolute *dependence* on the part of creatures, and of absolute *gift* on the part of God.

- \* At the same time, however, all creatures do mirror the inter-dependence within the Trinity itself in their (creatures') own inter-dependence upon one another, a reality of creation which, again, simply is, whether or not creatures are fully conscious of it.
- \* For these reasons, Creation is a complex, co-operative process, in which the Trinity *gives* life, and love, and wisdom to all creatures, who merely *receive* it. And this absolute dependence enables creatures to live in relative dependence (inter-dependence) with one another. In this way we simultaneously co-operate with God and with one another. This is the created order. When creatures live according to the created order, creation develops and flourishes. When they do not, creation's development is thwarted, and it languishes.
- \* One of the ways that the created order is commonly misunderstood is as a "conventional" order, in which the first party (God) lays down certain rules which the second party (creatures) must follow, and then metes out rewards to those who follow the rules, and punishments to those who don't. In a conventional order, the two parties perceive themselves as being only separate, not interconnected in any way. They only *appear* to be co-operating through the enforcement of a master-slave type of bond. This is not a co-operative dynamic, but one of dominance and submission. In contrast, the created order is a genuinely co-operative order. Its rules are dynamic, co-operative rules, rooted in the co-operative nature of the Trinity, where the Parties involved are separate, but not only separate. They are interconnected in complex ways, as are the creatures that share in their life.
- \* This Created World is not identical to the Unseen World within the Mind of God before time began. Although it is vast, the Created World is not limitless. Built-in limitations are common to all creatures. The greatest of these limits is that none of us lasts forever in this earthly form. Our bodies (including their brains) are mortal -- subject to a constant stream of changing conditions which provoke many ups and downs in our lives. This vulnerability is simply part of our mortal nature.

- \* Our vulnerability to the changing conditions within and around us is, to say the least, very "*distracting*." In Creation, what we first see with our eyes is a world full of many separate things. And what we first feel toward these many things is mixed. Some of them we like; for one reason or another, they bring us pleasure. Some of them we dislike because they bring us pain. And for some of them we feel nothing at all; they bring us neither pleasure nor pain, and we tend to ignore them. Very quickly, we organize the Created World for ourselves along these lines, according to our senses. This works very well for less evolved creatures, but it is not adequate for more highly evolved creatures like ourselves, and can in fact prevent us from following and fulfilling the created order.
  
- \* And yet, this is another built-in limitation of the Created World. From a human point of view, we are to some extent born in confinement to what we can perceive through our five physical senses. We experience this confinement intensely until *the life of the mind* begins to consciously develop within us (which doesn't take long). But this development of the life of the mind is not automatic. It requires a certain facilitating environment. It does not seem to happen on its own, but only in the context of an *already* wise and loving community. Our development as creatures is thus highly dependent on our context. In the created world, nothing happens "outside" of a context. And some contexts facilitate our development, while others do not.
  
- \* In spite of these limitations, deep within every particle of creation, there is a kind of "memory" of what was before Creation, a memory of our eternal point of origin within the Wise & Loving Community of the Holy Trinity, the ultimate "facilitating environment."
  
- \* How can we have a "memory" of a "time" before we ever had a physical existence, before all worlds, before space and time? It clearly cannot be what we ordinarily think of as a memory. It cannot be something that was manufactured by the brain out of our sensory experiences. It would have to be a kind of "supernatural" memory; a memory that has no physical origins or properties whatsoever; a memory which is "located" in the Mind of God, and which we share in that aspect of ourselves which is not physical, in our souls.
  
- \* Initially, we experience this memory quite dimly, perhaps only as a vague, melancholy sense of a "paradise" that has somehow been lost, and a longing to somehow return to it. Still, this memory guides us to seek out the kinds of contexts in which we can grow and flourish. As its vision becomes clearer, we begin to recognize this "paradise" as something not material, eventually as something

Divine, and ultimately as our faith in the reality an Unseen World, in the Divine Life of the Trinity, which we long to consciously, actively participate in in our daily lives.

- \* In more evolved creatures like ourselves, we call this deepest memory and longing the "inner compass" of our souls, our moral and spiritual "center." It contains our ultimate purpose in this created world. And it guides us (dimly or clearly) toward the fulfillment of the created order within the details of daily life. It is very different than a conventional conscience, which goads us to follow certain rules and chastises us when we don't. It is much deeper than that. And rather than making us moralistic or neurotic, it guides us into developing genuine virtue and peace of mind.
- \* In less evolved creatures, this inner compass remains wholly unconscious; it is followed, as much as possible, by instinct. But all creatures, each in their own station, carry within them this same divine purpose: to incarnate, to embody their original, Unseen Life within the Trinity into the physical world of time and space.
- \* This is much easier to do if you are a sun or a moon, or a blade of grass or a butterfly. They all simply "follow their nature." They don't have to think it through and make choices. In fact (at least at this point in their development), they cannot.
- \* But for more evolved creatures, like ourselves, finding and following our divine purpose is more challenging. Through many miracles of creation, we have grown beyond mere instinct. We have grown to have hearts and minds and wills, which are **patterned** after the Heart and Mind and Will of the Trinity. And through this miraculous growth, we develop the **capacity** to *discover* and *follow the lead* of the Trinity, as it was in the Beginning, when we were simply Holy Thoughts in the Mind of the God.
- \* But life in the Middle is not so simple as it was in the Beginning, when there was only God and "no things" to distract us. Now, in the created world, we are surrounded by other created things, and, inevitably, we get distracted. Inevitably, we **mistake** certain temporal, created things -- things we can perceive with our five senses -- for eternal, divine things -- which are beyond sensory perception. Inevitably, we lose our place in the divine story. Unlike less evolved creatures, we inevitably "Fall" from perceiving and following the created order of things
- \* Still, our Falling is not the end of the world. It is not as if our "inner compass" somehow degenerates or dies. It actually cannot be destroyed, for it is a gift from God, built into our souls. It cannot be destroyed. But as we Fall, we lose our consciousness of our moral and spiritual center. It is as though it gets covered with

dust. And the more we Fall, the more dust collects upon it, and the less *real* it becomes to us subjectively.

- \* By analogy, this process of Falling is sometimes described as a progressive disease, in which our conscious connection to our divine origin and purpose gets progressively weakened, weakened even to the point of death -- not a physical death, but a "spiritual" one -- in which we lose all consciousness of the divine in our lives. This is indeed a tragic turn in the story, but it is not a **real** loss of hope. For in Falling -- even in Falling to the point of "spiritual death" -- we do not lose our real, true, objective connection to the Life of the Trinity. We only lose our *consciousness* of that connection. And consciousness can be raised, again and again. We learn over time that our inevitable Fallings become part of our spiritual growth process. This is part of what tradition calls "the mystery of iniquity." At the same time, as St. Paul later reminds us, if we try to control this mystery -- by seeking to Fall more and more, so that we can grow more and more -- quite the opposite happens. We become more deluded about God, ourselves and others, not more aware.
  
- \* At the center of the Middle of the story is the person of Jesus. "In the fullness of time" -- in the moment when it was most bearable to humanity, who kept Falling and Falling deeper and deeper into a sense of disconnection from God -- the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, becomes flesh, becomes one of us, becomes human. But unlike other humans, he is also a member of the Trinity. And his human life is a life of perfect co-operation with the Father and the Spirit. He becomes for us the human face of God. In his Presence, we rediscover our First Love, the Love that flows continually, eternally between the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Love that surrounded us and nurtured us in the Beginning, before time and space began. He lives a fully human life. And he is killed by a group of conventionally religious and irreligious people. He dies as one of us, a mortal earthling, but is risen again by the Father through the Spirit to reveal to us that Love, the Love of the Trinity, neither dies nor has a grudge. And then, his physical presence, every molecule of it, leaves us. But with his leaving, there is another sending forth, of the Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, into our hearts and minds and bodies. In the same way that Jesus taught us, or *reminded* us of "everything" about the Father, the Spirit teaches us, or *reminds* us of "everything" about Jesus. All three teach us, or remind us of, the same thing, which is everything: That this created life is all about participation in the Divine Life of the Trinity, here and now, in the midst of things. That we were created **from** Love, to live **in** Love, and **to** Love. A Love that is not our own, but is the Life of the Trinity at work within us and flowing through us.

- \* And so, the mystery of the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection becomes the great turning point in the Middle of the story, the turning point of life in the created world. Again and again, we Fall. Again and again, dust settles onto our "inner compass" and needs to be dusted off. Again and again, we need to be redeemed, restored, re-created -- not only physically, but spiritually -- within our hearts and minds and wills. Again and again, we need to be re-**aligned** with our Divine Purpose and its fulfillment here on earth, to be re-**tuned** to the Life of the Trinity within us and between us, and between all creatures. In Christ we encounter this re-creation in its ultimate form.
  
- \* In a formal, highly organized and focused way, this re-creation happens again and again as we consciously participate in the Sacred Drama of the Liturgy, which tells us the Whole Story (Beginning, Middle, and End), and, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, lifts us up to perceive what our physical senses cannot -- how Love itself, the Life of the Trinity, is unfolding here and now in the midst of our daily life experiences.
  
- \* In less formal ways, this re-creation happens again and again as we consciously participate in "the liturgy of everyday life" -- in the spiritual conversations and silences that we experience in prayer and in fellowship with other people and other created things; in work, in play, in rest, in reflection, and other creative activities. Here too we are lifted up from within to perceive and to become channels of the Love of the Trinity.
  
- \* Our practical goal in the Middle of the story is to develop **skill** in "the spirituality of little things." It is a very subtle skill, not a mechanical one, more like an art or a science. As we are grasped by "the big picture" of our sharing in the Life of the Trinity before this world began, we learn to recognize that, not just ourselves, but all of the other "little things" in creation are full of divine significance. We begin to see, as St. Francis described, the triune Image of God being reflected in the mirror of creation. And our perspective on all the "little things" of created life changes fundamentally. These "little things" cease to be distractions from the spiritual life, but integral parts of it, little incarnations. The green of the grass becomes greener to us. The fragility of a bee, being sustained by a drop of nectar, becomes worthy of protection from harm. The smile or the cry of an infant becomes a revelation of Divine Love. Signing a petition for some just concern, or listening attentively to someone for a moment; or feeding a poor person, or removing a staple from a teabag before you compost it -- become real ways of consciously participating in the Life of the Trinity on earth. We begin to perceive and experience God in the

little things of our lives, and this gives us a deep sense of inner coherence and peace that manifests outwardly.

- \* This wonderful spiritual outcome does not grow in a vacuum, however. On the contrary, it grows best in particular contexts, and does not grow well *at all* in others. And so, to be up for such a life in this created world, we ourselves need to be located and rooted within contexts that foster our own growth in divine grace, foster our own skillfulness in the spirituality of little things, foster our own flourishing. As this growth actually happens in our own lives, we become increasingly able to help other creatures (including other human beings) by **co-creating** with God and with them the kinds of contexts in which their lives can flourish. This is not a superficial way of life; it is simple, but very deep. Consider a very human example:
- \* There was a day when you first physically appeared on this planet -- when you were conceived by your biological parents, and gestated in a warm, tranquil space for 9 months (more or less), until the day finally came that you were **launched** into the outside world -- into some particular place and culture -- into the care of particular parents (or perhaps, only one parent; or perhaps, another family member; or perhaps, a representative of the Crown, if there were no family members who were able to care for you.)
- \* But whatever the case, once you were born into this world, your "spiritual life" changed dramatically. For now that you were in the Middle of the story, your Holy Communion with the Trinity was not without distractions and interruptions. On the contrary, now you were **situated** within all the sights & sounds & feelings of creation at large, and within a particular community of other human beings. Here are two extreme examples of how this might turn out:
- \* If you were very fortunate when you were physically born into this world, you found yourself situated within a human community that **mirrored** (if only dimly) the kind of Communion you enjoyed with God before the foundations of the world. In that case, the process that **first** engaged you in becoming like God, becoming loving and wise... continued *almost* seamlessly... if only through "baby talk", and nursing, and gently replacing wet, stinky diapers with dry, soft, clean ones. As the Divine Life was mirrored to you in all of these little ways, you come to experience yourself and others as children of God. You could look into the sky and see "Brother Sun & Sister Moon," as St. Francis did. You could perceive the invisible, but very real, connections between yourself and all of creation. Of course, this awesome spiritual attainment was not something that you developed "on your own." It was highly dependent on your context.

- \* Of course, not every infant -- when he or she is physically born into this world -- is so fortunate. If you were less fortunate, you found yourself situated within a human community that did **not** mirror (even dimly) the kind of wise and loving communion that you once enjoyed with God before time began. In that case, deep within yourself, you still "remember" and long to be within that Community of Love, but unless your actual human context improves, you will inevitably learn to posture yourself for survival in a world where it seems that there are no real connections between yourself and others that give you the grace you need to flourish. And, tragically, living within this rigid autonomy tends to lead you into further relationships of rivalry, even of violence, with other humans and other created things. Still, this too can change, but only if your context improves.
- \* Remember that these are extreme examples, given to underscore the point of how much context matters. In reality, the process of creation is rarely so black & white. Instead, we all fall somewhere in between such extremes, in a more or less dusty middle zone, where we all experience some sense of disconnection from the Divine Life of the Trinity. Still it is only a "sense" of disconnection, not a real one. The Divine Life remains the real source of our lives, but to one degree or another, we all come to lose our *sense* of that Reality, our *recognition* of it, our *consciousness* of it.
- \* This was all understood from the Beginning within the Mind of God. And so, there was already a divine "plan" in place to redeem or re-create the consciousness we lose in Falling. A means of restoring our sense of connection to God. A means of teaching us how to live, here on this earth, in conscious, active participation in the Life of the Trinity.
- \* In short, the "means" is Christ's church, very broadly defined. The church as what tradition calls "the Mystical Body of Christ." The church as a community of persons who are actually coming to understand and experience and live their lives in conscious co-operation with the Trinity. The church, in this deeper sense, has no fixed address. But it can be found at many fixed addresses at many times in many places. This broader church has the same mission as the family, but on a different scale and in many different contexts. Its mission is to mirror in its relationships with all creatures the Divine Life of the Trinity. Keep in mind that the community life of any particular congregation of believers will only imperfectly embody this mystical vision of the church, since its parishioners will operate at different levels of spiritual maturity. Ideally, there should be enough diversity, on the continuum of immature to mature, to accommodate the different spiritual needs of parishioners. But

practically, not every congregation will be able to nurture the spiritual life of every believer. Much depends on leadership and how well it embodies the goal of active, conscious participation in the Life of the Trinity within the details of diocesan and parish life. But that is another story in itself.

- \* This redemption -- this restoration of our sense of connection to the Life of the Trinity and to all of creation -- begins formally with our Baptism in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our immersion into the Life of God on earth. Our immersion into the death and resurrection of Christ. Our immersion into a community of believers -- those who are coming to know the whole story, coming to find their place in it, and learning how to live the story out in their daily lives. This community of believers -- through the Power of the Spirit -- commits to helping us join them in this process. They commit to helping us find our own personal place within the created order.
- \* Baptism is our formal introduction to the sacramental life. Sacraments are material signs of spiritual graces, as the created world at large mirrors the Unseen World of the Trinity. Baptism of water signifies Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This signification is not merely a metaphor, but a sacred symbol, in which the Unseen World and the physical world actually "touch" or come together in consciousness. This is the case not only in adult baptism, but also in infant baptism, through the invisible interconnections of the believers' consciousness with Christ and with the newly baptized -- interconnections which are then embodied further in many acts of care and nurture.
- \* From there, through engagement in the sacramental living of the community, with all of its imperfections, we gradually become credible witnesses to the fact that **another world** is possible, because we ourselves are already coming to experience it, to live within it, and to live it out, even in the "little things" of our every day lives. In this way, we come to participate -- very significantly -- in the redemption of Creation. And we continue this kind of participation, in one way or another, until the day we die and leave this mortal life.

## **The End**

- \* The End of the story is, in a sense, a return to the Beginning. At the same time, the End is very different than the Beginning. Our tradition calls the End of the story "The Beatific Vision," in which we will know God, participate in the Life of the Trinity, "face to face," without the mediation of sacred symbols, without materiality, or at least not materiality as we knew it in the created world. If we have bodies at

all, perhaps they will be like the resurrected body of Jesus, scars and all, but luminous -- bodies which tell the story of our journey from the Beginning, through the Middle, to the End.

- \* The End is different from the Beginning not because God has changed, but because we have. It is different for us now because of the experience we gained through our creation and our lives as mere mortals. By analogy, as we mature in created life, we sometimes have the experience of "coming full circle," of returning to the place we started. But, upon returning, that place is no longer the same. We see it now more as it actually is, because the process of our journey away from that starting point (the many experiences we have had, the understandings we have developed) has fundamentally altered our point of view. With this new perspective we may imagine that we never really needed to journey away at all, that everything we needed to find was right here all the time. And that is true in one sense, but it is also true that without the journey we wouldn't have been able to perceive and appreciate all that was actually there all along. In this sense, the End of the story is much more than the Beginning, because we can now perceive God more fully as God is, without illusions. Not that God ceases to be fathomless, but that by grace and through works we have developed far greater depth perception, we have become more completely like Jesus, more completely co-operative with the Trinity, although we are still not identical with it, still simply worshippers of it, but we are finally worshippers in spirit and in truth. This is our completion, our perfection.
- \* The End is Endless. But what more will happen? Will other worlds be created, other material journeys be taken? We really do not know. For now the story leaves certain questions unanswered, perhaps because in this earthly life they are merely distractions, things that become merely speculative, things that we do not really need to know. The story outlines the basics, the things that we really need to know for now. Of course, in our time on earth, we need to fill in the outline, to reflect further on what it all means to us. And the church, broadly defined, can help us in this process.
- \* In the End, there will surely be many even deeper questions to be asked and answered, "face to face." And having the time and the interest will no longer be a problem.

**Please let me know if this leaves you with questions, any questions at all.**

Fr, Rishi Sativihari