

Go,
Rebuild
My Church!

**Comprehensive
Course on the
Franciscan
Mission
Charism**



The Origin
of Mission
in the Mystery
of the Trinity

Lesson Unit 6

The documents of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* have deeply affected the understanding of mission. Constant efforts are being made to clarify its purpose and objectives, and to determine the most appropriate methods to carry it out. *Go, Rebuild My Church: A Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism*, provides a particular context to stimulate dialogue about the many dimensions of mission and the inevitable recognition of the equality, dignity and humanity of all persons. The course is unique, since it is genuinely inter-Franciscan and inter-cultural. An ongoing process for exchange among all members of the Franciscan Family from six continents provides for a creative meshing of the best in current theology, Franciscan research and pastoral practice. The vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent our search for a fuller understanding of humanity in the light of the Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ.

As Franciscans, with the world as our "cloister," we welcome this refreshing moment of intercultural dialogue. Francis was the first among founders to situate the missionary dimension of the Gospel call clearly within his rule. This study reawakens us to the challenge and genuineness of Francis' message for our own times.

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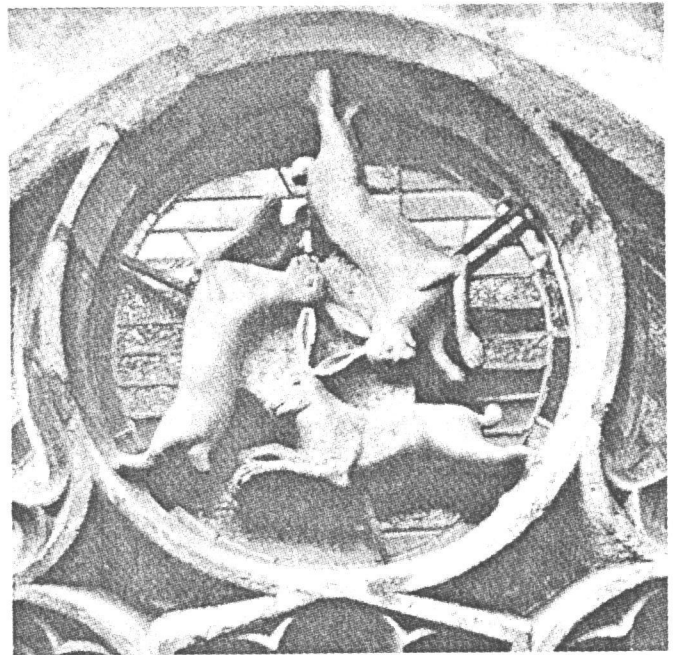
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Go, Rebuild My Church!

A Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism



The Origin of Mission in the Mystery of the Trinity



Lesson Unit 6





The Origin of Mission

in the Mystery of the Trinity

From the Sources

How Francis and his Brothers Sought
God's Word

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How Francis and His Brothers Sought God's Word



On Abraham's Lap.

It took some time before Francis was understood. However, the truth of what he spoke was evident by the simple way he lived his life. Bernard of Quintavalle and Peter of Catania, two respected men from the nobility of Assisi, were drawn to follow his example. "But what kind of foundation should the new community have?" Francis would ask himself. To obtain an answer, the three of them went into the church of

St. Nicholas. There, they wanted to seek God's word, but none of them was familiar with the use of the Bible. Then Francis had an idea. Were they not three who now had a common goal? And is God not Triune? So why not open the Bible three times and thereby receive God's will? No sooner had Francis said this, and it was done! And God showed them the way (see L3C 27-29).



Introduction



In the Gospel of Luke,
we encounter Jesus
as someone who heals the sick,

frees the distressed and brings Good News to the poor. He is the Messiah promised by the prophets, who saves people through His death and resurrection. A mysterious 'must' defines His way: "Was the Messiah not bound to suffer before entering his glory?" (Lk 24:26). The Gospel of Luke ends in Jerusalem. From there Christianity expanded over the whole of the then known world. This wonderful dynamic is described in the Acts of the Apostles. The book reads like a captivating novel. One is taken along with Peter and Paul, is guided from town to town and sees how small Christian communities develop everywhere. A map is necessary if one wants to follow the long tour of Paul over land and sea. The Gospel of John, however, gives a different impression. It draws us into the depth rather than out into the wide world.

John sees Jesus' mission totally anchored in the Father. Everything hinges on Jesus, but Jesus always refers to the Father. "What the Father has said to Me, therefore, is what I speak" (Jn 12:50). In His farewell speeches, He promises His grieving disciples a comforter, the Holy Spirit Who "will guide...[them] into all truth" (Jn 16:13).

Because of the love of the Father, Jesus comes to humankind so that "[we] may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). And He doesn't want anything else except that we love one another with the love with which the Father loves the Son (see Jn 17:23) and He sends us to pass on this love and this life of abundance.

Thus, this mission is much more than the export of European Christianity to Africa, Asia and America. The origin of 'mission' is much deeper than the schools, hospitals and churches which we can see. The writings of Francis and Clare do not talk about this kind of mission at all. They

are concerned with life in a community where people see themselves as sisters and brothers loved and graced by God.

It is where they do what Jesus did and eventually died for: the liberation of women and men to a life which is more than just vegetative, a life in abundance, which starts here and completes itself in God. Considering the inhuman conditions in which the majority of people are nearer to death than to life, the original Franciscan justification for mission becomes profoundly urgent.





hereas
the following lesson

deals more with the “*exterior side*” of the Franciscan mission (methods, recipients), this lesson looks more at the “*interior side*”: motivation, source, origin. First, we will look at the use of the verb ‘*to send*’ and we will establish that Francis, like John an “*admirer of the Trinity*,” (L3C 29), sees the origin of mission in the life and love of the Trinitarian God. In step two, this observation will be developed. Jesus is the missionary of the Father; He reveals God’s name, that is, love through word and deed. He executes God’s work of creation, redemption and perfection which only knows love as the single motivation. Word and deed flow together to form the special way of life of Jesus.

This way of life is imitated by the minor brothers, and in a different way also by the sisters of St. Clare, and by the “*women and men of penance*.” All of them “*give birth to Jesus by their holy work which should glow as an example for others*” (2LrF 53; see also 3LAg 25). The mission is the continuation of what Jesus said and did. This happens because of “*divine inspiration*” (LR 12:1) and the power of the Holy Spirit. Step three shows the role of the Holy Spirit as seen by Francis and Clare. Step four solidifies the findings and describes the origin and goal of the Franciscan mission which is totally guided by the attitude and preaching of Jesus.



Presentation of the Most Holy Trinity.





When Francis reflects on the mission of his brothers,

he doesn't start with his own ideas or with practical aspects, but with that which is happening in the innermost depths of God. The origin and

model of mission is to be found in the Father Himself, His way of sending the Son, and the way in which the Son fulfils this mission.



The Origin of Mission: the Trinitarian God



The Term "to send"

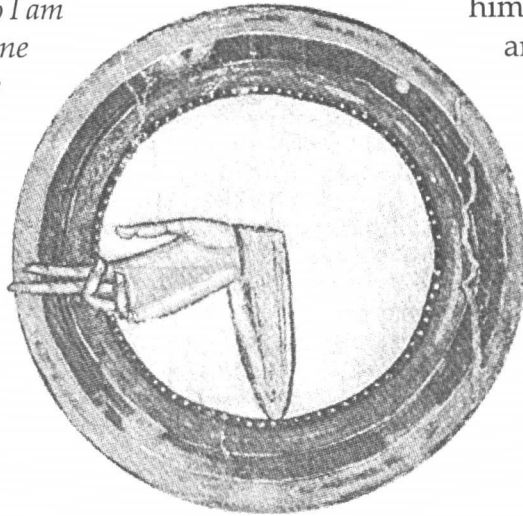


Francis and Clare did not know the term 'mission' as 'calling' (see LU 7). But we find the verb "to send": five times in Clare's writings (but only in the context of "to send for alms" and "to send letters") and twenty-six times in Francis' writings. Eleven times it is God the Father who 'sends'; three times it is Christ. This means that for Francis a dynamic missionary initiative proceeds from God; God is the origin of the mission. To express this view, Francis nearly always quotes texts from Holy Scripture: the Psalms (six times) and extracts from chapter 17 of St. John's Gospel (four times). Thus, the way Francis uses the

term "to send" reveals the source from which Francis draws his missionary concept and what he sees as the foundation of mission. He knows he is part of a living process, a stream of life, which starts with the living Triune God and wants to encompass the whole world. Before he himself sends his companions out into the world in all directions (see 1C 29), he sees himself as an envoy, as a missionary. Francis understood and lived this 'passive' side as well as the 'active' side of mission. He realised that he was entrusted with a mission, a message that he must make known and proclaim:



As I am the servant of all... so I am bound to wait upon everyone and make known to them the fragrant words of my Lord. Therefore...I have proposed to set before you in this present letter and message the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life (2LtF 2-3).



In his introduction to this letter "to all religiously alive Christians, clergy and laity, men and women, to all, who live in the whole world," Francis states the reason for his universal claim: He wants to write to all of them, because he sees

Missionary initiative proceeds from God.

himself as a servant to everyone and in the service of the Gospel which gives meaning to life. For Francis it is full of fragrance and life. It has attracted him; therefore, he wants to pass it on. In so doing, he keeps his words close to the words of Jesus; his own word is only the prolongation, the actualisation of Jesus' message, Who himself is only the visible and audible Word of the Father. Francis passes on what comes from the very heart of God, from the innermost mystery of the Trinity.

The Father Sends the Son, Born of Mary, through the Holy Spirit



One can feel in his Christmas psalm how much Francis entered into a mission that begins in God:

For the most Holy Father of Heaven, our King before all ages, has sent His Beloved Son from on high and He was born of the Blessed Virgin Holy Mary (OfP 15:3).

The initiative was with the Father. He, the timeless One, enters into time; the "living and true God" sent His Son, who calls out: "You are my Father!" (OfP 15:1.4). This voice of the Son, which always, even in bitter suffering, trustfully turns to the Father is the answer of love to the Father. It is the echo of His love, which cannot stay alone; it has to flow. This communication between Father and Son has an intense quality of its own which, in the New Testament, we call the Holy Spirit. Francis must have sensed something of the fulfilment of life and love in the Trinitarian God, when he made up his mind to preach "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life" (2LtF 3). Accordingly, he develops an entire theology of the Word of God:

This Word of the Father, so worthy, so holy and glorious, in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from which He received the flesh of humanity and our



See God's meekness.



frailty. Though He was rich beyond all other things in this world He, together with the most blessed Virgin, His mother, willed to choose poverty (2LtF 4-5).

From the heights, to humiliation; from eternity, into the dimension of time; from divinity, to

human nature; from wealth, to poverty – that is the way, the movement, the humility of God. It starts with the Father Himself and becomes visible for us human beings through the Holy Spirit in the birth of the Son of God by the Virgin Mary.



The Mission of the Son



Jesus Reveals the Father



Above all the Gospel of John emphasises the close relationship between the Father and the Son. More than forty times it announces in one way or another that the Father has sent His Son (e.g. Jn 5:16-30). It is never the Father who is sent; it is always the Son. He tells the world what He has heard from the Father. He frees humankind from an image of God which is too limited. He fails, however, to do so with the Pharisees and with the Scribes, exactly those people who knew the Old Testament quite well and had already fixed their image of God (see Jn 5:36-47; 8:12-29).

Jesus is the powerful proclaimer of the Father and His unsurpassable Word. Father and Son are one with each other. That is why John is able to say clearly: *"The Word became Flesh"* (Jn 1:14).

The Son wholly represents the Father; He who sends and He who is sent are one: *"Anyone who has seen Me, has seen the Father"* (Jn 14:9).

Throughout his Gospel, John makes use of another term – 'name' – as indicative of how Jesus

reveals the Father. This is most fully expressed in John 17. Francis uses 'name' twice in crucial parts of his scriptures, most expressively in Chapter 22 of the Earlier Rule, which we can read as a *"spiritual testament"*. In it the term *"to send"* is used four times with the following meanings respectively: As the Father had *sent* His Son, the Son *sends* His apostles into the world; Francis, for his part, participates in this mission by *send-*ing out his brothers. At the end of the long chapter he calls out:

Let us, therefore, hold on to the words, the life, and the teaching and the Holy Gospel of Him Who humbled Himself to ask His Father for us and to make His name known to us, saying: Father, glorify Your name (ER 22:41).

For John, as well as for Francis, Jesus' mission is to intercede for us before the Father and reveal His name to us. He shows mankind who the Father is. God, *"Whom we ...are not worthy to name"* (ER 23:5) wants to be known amongst us. He wants to reveal to all people His very Self, His





"The Word became Flesh" (Jn 1:14).

name. On the one hand, God is, and is going to be, a mystery, *"invisible, indescribable, incomprehensible"* (ER 23:11); on the other hand, God has revealed Himself in such a way that Francis does not tire of praising Him with a long litany of many glorious names (see PrsG). In utter amazement, astonished and stammering, he lists attributes, all of which are meant to demonstrate the greatness and kindness of God, but cannot fully grasp it.

Jesus Reveals Love



All the names which Francis attributes to the Eternal God have love as their keynote. He varies the phrase *"God is love"* (1 Jn 4:8) twice in his litany: *"You are love (amor/caritas)"* (PrsG 4). When Jesus came to reveal the Father, He came to reveal love. Francis recognises this relationship in the highpriestly prayer which he adopts to pray with Jesus for his apostles:

You have sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world...But it is not for these alone that I pray, but also for those who through their words put their faith in Me. May they all be one as You, Father, are in Me and I in You; so also may they be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me, that You loved them as You loved Me. I will make Your name known to them, so that the love You had for Me may be in them and I may be in them (ER 22:51-54; Jn 17:18,23,26).

The Father offers a love to humanity which is as deep as His love for His own Son (see Jn 15:9; 17:23,26). The world will recognise this love, as long as Jesus' apostles are moved by it and are led to unity. To pray *"hallowed be your name"* and announce God's name means to promote love, true devotion and nearness.

Jesus is the missionary of the Father, because He announces

His name to mankind: Through word and deed He had shown that God's will is love: *"This is his rule: We should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love each other"* (1 Jn 3:23).



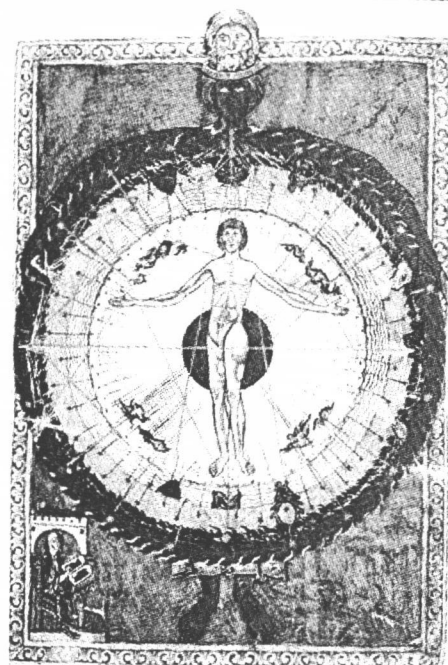
Jesus Perfects the Work of the Father

2.3



Jesus reveals who the Father is: Love. He embraces humankind with the same love He has for His Son. Jesus came not only to talk about love, but also to demonstrate it. Through very concrete deeds He shows how God is. This second aspect of Jesus' mission is described in Chapter 23 of the Early Rule in the manner of a preface (see ER 23:1-4). According to this reading, God reveals Himself by creating a good world where the human being is the centre and its very peak. The harmony which human beings wilfully destroyed is restored by the Incarnation and the suffering and death of the Son of God, who had also participated in the creation of the world. He will return *"in the splendour of majesty"* in order to sit in judgement and to bring everything to a final harmony and order.

Creation, redemption and perfection is the threefold work for which Francis, here and in other writings, expresses his thanks to the Father who perfects the work of salvation *"through His only Son with the Holy Spirit"* (ER 23:1). The Father initiates, the Son carries it out, the Holy Spirit is its power.



God reveals Himself by creating a good world where the human being is the centre.

The Missionary Way of Life of Jesus

2.4



From all that has been said earlier, a unified missionary form of life of Jesus is revealed:

- The Father sends His beloved Son to the world because of His love for humanity;
- Jesus understands His mission as proclaiming to the human race the name, the nature and the love of God;
- His mission also consists of deeds, especially in devoting His life to the poor and to sinners;
- The Son accepts this mission by taking on *"the flesh of humanity and our frailty"* (2Ltf 4-14):

- ➡ poverty, which from His birth places Him on the side of the poor;
- ➡ suffering, which He consciously accepts and makes fruitful for everyone: He celebrates the Last Supper to offer His Body and Blood for us and *"thus being with His believers until the perfection of the world"* (Adm 1:22);



"The mystery of Jesus on the cross is a mystery within the mystery".
(cf. Apostolic Letter 6th January 2001)



➡ death, by offering Himself to the Father as "victim and sacrifice...for our sins on the altar of the cross" (2LtF 11ff).

- The Son promises to send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

The life and suffering of Jesus for humanity shows clearly what the nature of mission must be: a passionate desire to show solidarity with the poverty, suffering and death of human beings, supported by trust in God, and hope for the arrival of His kingdom. It means to be completely available for one's fellow human beings.

Mission in the Holy Spirit



Through the Son with the Holy Spirit



Let us go back once more to the intense prayer of thanksgiving in which Francis thanks the Father for the creation, redemption and perfection of the world. He not only sees the Son at work, but also the Holy Spirit:

All-powerful, Most Holy, Most High and Supreme God, we thank You for Yourself. For through Your Holy will and through Your only Son with the Holy Spirit, You have created all things, spiritual and corporal, and having made us in Your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise...and because all of us wretches and sinners are not worthy to pronounce Your name, we humbly ask that our Lord Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son...together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, give You thanks... (ER 23:1,5).

Since, in a special way, Francis knows about our misery and sins, he stresses the mediating role of the Son who is loved by the Father, and of the Holy Spirit. Following the example of Jesus, all human beings should thank the Father for everything. It is this love between Father and Son, the personified Love, the Holy Spirit, Who is the only One Who can answer the Father on the same level, Who is equal to the Father. That is why only in the Holy Spirit can we say: "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15).



*"...with the Holy Spirit,
You have created all things."*



The Holy Spirit as the Principle of Life

Francis is convinced that his new life is a work of the Spirit. Those who follow him do this also through “*divine inspiration.*” This is the real impulse for entering into the community as well as for “*going among the Saracens*”:

If somebody by divine inspiration wants to accept this way of life and comes to our brothers (ER 2:1) ... Who [by Divine inspiration] desires to go among the Saracens and other non-believers should go with the permission of his minister (ER 16:3).

do penance, which means to “*love God with their whole heart, with their whole soul and love their neighbours as themselves*” (see 1LTF 1:1-6). These words of Francis, which are also the opening words of the rules of the Third Order Regular and of the Secular Order, make clear that a life of penance is charismatic and spiritual. It is this spiritual life that binds all the Franciscan Orders together.

The mission among non-believers, too, should bring about a “*new birth*”, should lead to a new



The meeting of Clare and Francis.

In the same way, Clare and her sisters were motivated to follow Christ in a radical way: “*By divine inspiration you made yourself daughters and servants of the heavenly Father and are engaged to the Holy Spirit*” (FormLife 1). “*The spirit of the Lord will rest*” upon all brothers and sisters when they

life. First and foremost, missionaries should live among the people in a simple way and be a witness by relating to each other as brothers and sisters. But then they should, “*if it pleases the Lord,*” proclaim the distinctly Christian belief in the Triune God, so that the others are led to be



baptised, *"because whoever has not been born again of water and the Holy Spirit, cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (ER 16:7). Francis refers here to a phrase of Jesus in John 3:5. According to the Gospel of John, Francis sees the Holy Spirit as the life-creating power, as the vital principle, without which there is no life. This insight also guides him in his Admonitions, where he uses the following words of Paul:

For the written law condemns to death, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6).

No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except under the influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).

With the first word Francis admonishes that *"knowledge should be followed by good works"* (Adm 7). Research and knowledge kill if they only satisfy curiosity or pride; they must lead to practice, to

deeds. The motivation and goal of our knowledge of God is love (see LU 4). With the second word, he gives reasons for avoiding the sin of envy (Adm 8). Envy is blasphemy because everything good is inspired by the Holy Spirit and belongs to God. Francis is so convinced that the Holy Spirit lives in a Christian that he can even say:

It is the Spirit of the Lord, who lives in His faithful, Who receives the most Holy Body and the Blood of the Lord. All others who do not share in this same spirit and who dare to receive Him, eat and drink judgement to themselves (Adm 1:2; 1 Cor 11:29).

It is the life-giving Spirit who makes the Christian; nobody can be a Christian without Him.

We are Missionaries in Relationship with God



We are Missionaries because we are related to God. For Francis of Assisi belief in the Trinity is not an empty formula or an abstract doctrine, but a way of life, a participation in the life of *"the living and true God"* Himself (OfP 15:1). In the Form of Life for Clare, he describes the lives of the Poor Sisters. As daughters of the Father and spouses of the Holy Spirit, they are related to God. What is true for them is also true for *"all men and women who do penance and continue doing so."*

They are children of the heavenly Father, whose works they do; they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus



We became mothers to God when our life and actions manifest Christ.

Christ (Mt 5:45; 12:50). *We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in Heaven* (Mt 12:50). *We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to Him through a holy manner of working which should shine before others as an example* (1LtF 1:7-10).

Here, Francis applies to the Christian believer in general, what he had said in particular about Mary: She is the chosen daughter and servant of the Father, mother of our Lord Jesus Christ



and bride of the Holy Spirit (OfP: Ant). What happened to Mary can happen again any time when the Holy Spirit is at work in a person.

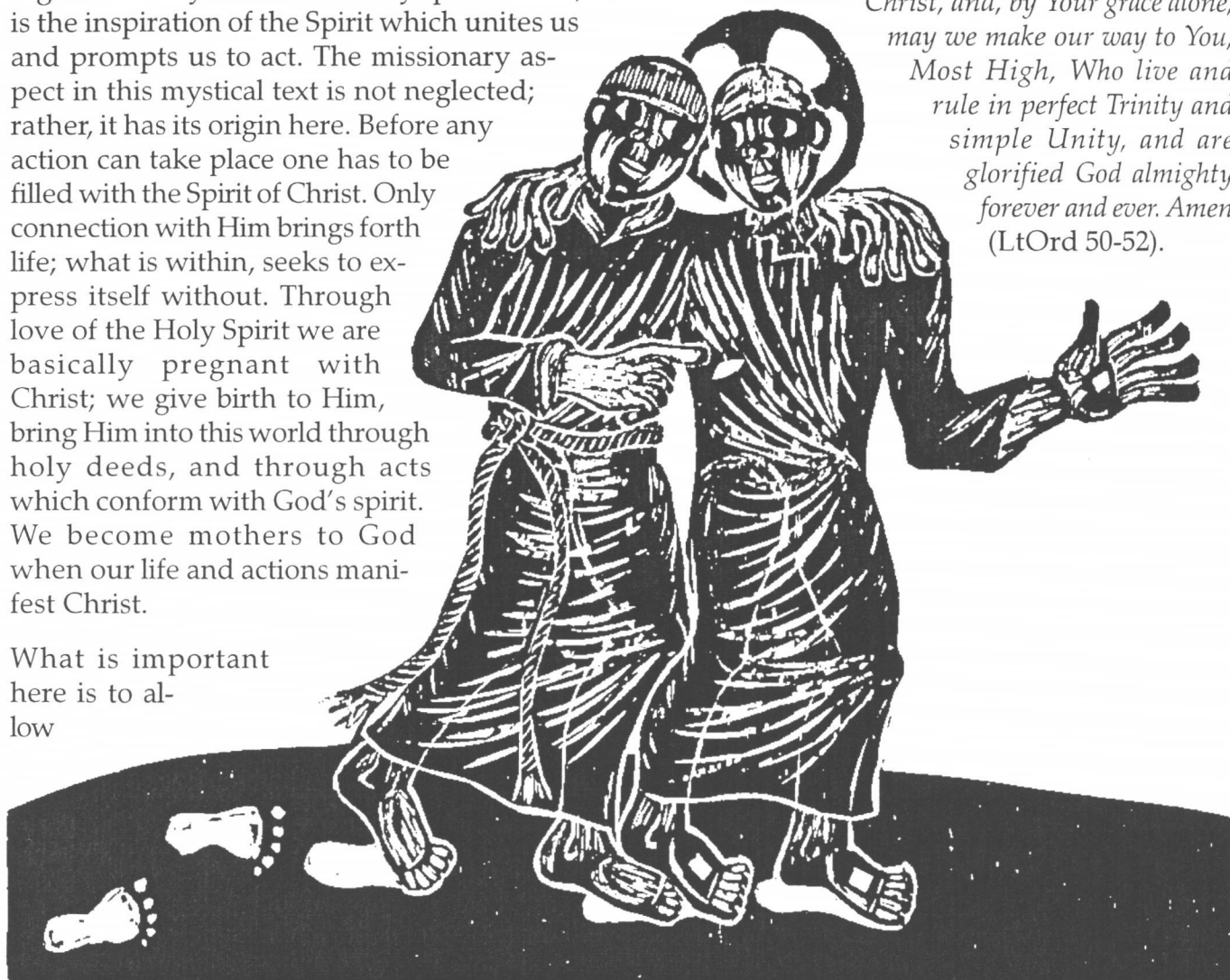
It is He who transforms non-believers into believers. That is why Francis not only greets Mary but also *"all virtues which are poured into the hearts of the faithful through the grace and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, that from being unbelievers, You may make them faithful to God"* (SalBVM 6).

It is good that the quotation from the Letter to the Faithful is part of most of the basic documents of the Franciscan Order today. Nowhere else does Francis describe our relationship with God and with each other as mystically dynamic as he does here. We are a family of God, linked together not by blood ties but by spiritual ties; it is the inspiration of the Spirit which unites us and prompts us to act. The missionary aspect in this mystical text is not neglected; rather, it has its origin here. Before any action can take place one has to be filled with the Spirit of Christ. Only connection with Him brings forth life; what is within, seeks to express itself without. Through love of the Holy Spirit we are basically pregnant with Christ; we give birth to Him, bring Him into this world through holy deeds, and through acts which conform with God's spirit. We become mothers to God when our life and actions manifest Christ.

What is important here is to allow

oneself to be animated by the Spirit of God and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ – not only to countries far away and in the far future, but here and now. This is very clearly seen in the letter which Francis wrote to his brothers towards the end of his life. This letter ends with a prayer, which stresses the role of the Holy Spirit and which shows us again the foundation of any mission in the Trinity:

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, give us miserable ones the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do and always to desire what pleases You. Inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footsteps of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and, by Your grace alone, may we make our way to You, Most High, Who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity, and are glorified God almighty forever and ever. Amen (LtOrd 50-52).



He who sees Francis is reminded of Jesus.





The Franciscan Mission



The Mission of the Franciscan Movement



The mission of the Church can basically be nothing else than the continuation and extension of the mission of Jesus. This is how Francis and Clare understood it too. Like the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church, the Franciscan mission also has

- the same origin: the Father;
- the same goal: to contribute to the great circulation of God's love;
- the same prototype: Jesus Christ and His attitude towards the poor, towards suffering and towards the obedient acceptance of death.

When Francis solemnly declares that God has sent his friars out into the whole world, he is

indicating with whom the initiative lies, namely with God alone, and which area their mission is to embrace, namely the whole world. The most important content of the proclamation is that God is good and must be praised in words and deeds, "to bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all-powerful except Him" (LtOrd 9).

What else is this than the mission of Christ? He revealed to the world who God is, especially His love, His *power*, as John expresses it, His *glory* and His goodness. For Francis, too, the missionary existence has to integrate the word in an active life (see ER 11;14; 17:3). And Clare also knows that the sisters, in spite of their reclusive life, "should be a mirror and example to those living in the world" (TestCl 6).

Proclaim God to All People



In his Early Rule Francis introduces to his brothers a model for preaching upon which they can and should freely draw, no matter what circumstances, no matter what kind of audience. This model consists of two parts:

- The first part invites listeners to turn towards the mystery of the Triune God: "Fear and honour, praise and bless, give thanks and adore the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and in Unity" (ER 21:2).
- The second part calls for conversion (penance), which is mainly shown in forgiveness and in charity (see ER 21:3-7).

In another chapter Francis gives special empha-

sis to the mystery of God, His majesty and His incomprehensibility. All human beings should turn to God in true faith and penance. It should be noted here that Francis seems to reduce faith and penance – to which the "lesser brothers and useless servants" are calling all persons – to loving and yearning for God (see ER 23:7-11). Thus the Franciscan missionary preaching coincides with Jesus' prayer:

...that the world may know that You have sent Me and that You have loved My people as You have loved Me...so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them and I may be in them (Jn 17:23, 26 in ER 22:53-54).



The Brothers should know that in proclaiming the Gospel they have to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who called Judas His friend and voluntarily offered Himself to those who crucified Him (see ER 22:2). They must be ready rather to endure all kinds of ill-will and sufferings than to fight and to quarrel (see ER 16:6-11). They ought to be subject to every creature and they ought to confess that they are Christians. Like Jesus they should be meek and humble of heart, as well as peace-loving, kind, friendly and modest (see LR 3:11).



Jesus surrenders to his enemies.

And *“for the love of Christ they must make themselves vulnerable to the visible and invisible enemies”,* since *“they have given themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ”* (ER 16:10; see SalV 14-18).

Clare, too, doesn't want anything else than to *“follow in the footsteps of Christ and His Holy Mother”* (RCI Prol: 2). *“The Son of God became the way for us,”* she writes in her testament (TestCl 5). She encourages her companion in Prague, St. Agnes:

Look upon Your Spouse, scourged untold times, and then died amid the suffering of the Cross (and) desire to imitate Him. If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him, if you weep with Him, you shall rejoice with Him (see 2LAg 20f).



Clare washes the feet of her sisters.

Jesus' behaviour determines the communal life in San Damiano all the way to the service of *“the washing of feet”*, which Clare carries out for her sisters (see LegCl 12).



The Aim of the Franciscan Mission



In Chapter 22 of the Earlier Rule, Francis combines two passages: John 17:24 and Mt 20:21:

Father, I wish that where I am those whom You have given Me may be with Me, so that they may see Your glory in Your kingdom (ER 22:55).

The addition of "in Your kingdom" (Mt 20:21) describes the place of glory which awaits the apostles. It is also the aim of Jesus' and Francis' mission to let human beings participate in the glory of the Father; to lead them into the kingdom of the Father, which "has been ready for you since the creation of the world" (Mt 25:34; ER 23:4).

This kingdom is the fulfilment of Jesus' wish that His apostles should be with Him that they may see the glory of the Father. It is the fulfilment of all human longing. In his song of consolation for the poor women of San Damiano Francis expresses this in another image: "since each one will be crowned in heaven as a queen – with Mary, the Virgin" (CtExh 6).

We can only get to such heights very slowly, through daily efforts facing all the progress and set-backs. We cannot achieve it by ourselves. We need support from our community of brothers and sisters.

Church and Franciscan Sources

Scripture	Mt 25,34; Lk 24,26; Jn 1,14; 10,10; 12,50; 14,9; 16,5-15; Rom 8,15; 1 Cor 12,3; 2 Cor 3, 6; 1 Jn 3,23; 4,8
Church Documents	RH 23; AG 2; RM 29
Franciscan Sources	ExhP 16; PrH; OfP 15:3; SalBVM 6; PrsG 4; 1 LtF 1, 1; 2LtF 1-5; 11ff; 13. 48-60; LtOrd 9f; 50ff; Adm 1,12f; 7; 8; 22; LR 12:1; ER 2:1; 16:3.7, 10f; 21-24; CtExh 13; 2LAg 3; RCl 1:3; TestCl 6; 1C 29; L3C 28; 29; 60; LegCl 1
Inter-Franciscan Documents	
OFM, OFM ^{Cap} , OFM ^{Conv} .	OFM ^{Cap} -Const. 98; 144; 174
Poor Clares	OSC-Const. 90, 2; OSC ^{Cap} -Const. 117; 155-157
Third Order Regular	Rule Nr. 2; 8-11
Secular Franciscans	Rule Nr. 1; 4; 13; Const. Art. 17; 37,3
Supplements	

Note: Course participants may add documents of their own communities to the list of sources.



Exercises



Exercise

Read the following text (in your group):
From *Ad gentes*, "Decree about the Missionary Activity of the Church," II. Vat. Council, 1965:

No. 2: *The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from "fountain-like love," the love of God the Father. As the principle without principle from Whom the Son is generated and from Whom the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son, God in His great and merciful kindness freely creates us and moreover, graciously calls us to share in His life and glory. He generously pours out, and never ceases to pour out, His divine goodness, so that He who is Creator*

of all things might at last become "all in all" (1Cor 15:28), thus simultaneously assuring His own glory and our happiness. It pleased God to call us all to share in His life and not merely as individuals, without any bond between us, but He formed us into a people in which His children who had been scattered were gathered together (see Jn 11:52).

Questions

1. What statements, which correspond to Franciscan views, are made here?
2. Identify differences!



Exercise

From *Redemptoris Missio*, "On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate," Encyclical of John Paul II, 1990:

No. 23: *John is the only Evangelist to speak explicitly of a 'mandate', a word equivalent to 'mission.'* He directly links the mission which Jesus entrusts to His disciples with the mission which He Himself has received from the Father: "As the Father has sent Me,

even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). Addressing the Father, Jesus says: "As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18). The entire missionary meaning of John's Gospel is expressed in the "priestly prayer": "This is Eternal Life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). The ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion which exists between the Father and the Son. The



disciples are to live in unity with one another, remaining in the Father and the Son, so that the world may know and believe (see Jn 17:21-23). This is a very important missionary text. It makes us understand that we are missionaries above all because of what we are as a Church whose innermost life is unity in love, even before we become missionaries in word or deed.

Questions

1. How far can you identify with the above text?
2. How 'missionary' is the community in which you live?



Exercise

From the Constitutions of the Poor Clares (1989):

Something of inestimable value is represented by our living in a communion of love. This life, which has its foundation in the communion of life within the Trinity, requires that we reveal this mystery of love more truly and clearly day by day (Art. 90:2).

Questions

1. To what extent can this be said about any Christian community?
2. Re-write this article in your own words.



Exercise

Yin-Yang and the Trinity

In his book "Return from Unknown Gods" J. Wichmann, an author of our times, describes his personal understanding of the two symbols:

In the neo-religious scene the Yin-Yang symbol is very popular. It expresses the polarity of being. Contrary to this more static polarity, the Trinity in a circle forms automatically a dynamic – a deity that dances with itself. Now the symbol of Trinity is circling within me, constantly changing its forms and becoming more and more interesting. I am surprised that theologians have not caught on much more to these signs of divine manifoldness and dynamics. The fact that a symbol relates to many people is shown by the popu-

larity of the Asian Yin-Yang circle. Why does the symbol of the Trinity which is familiar to our culture not have such a popularity? Is it not much more ambiguous and can it not produce many more images? Above all, it appeals to a totally different dimension than the tiresome, modern interpretation of the "dynamic of self organisation of the universe", which drives out any life of the spirit and in some 'New Age' circles succeeds as the term for spirit: the greatest victory of the mechanical view of life, which nowadays does not deny God anymore, but takes Him over. Then I would rather have the Trinity.

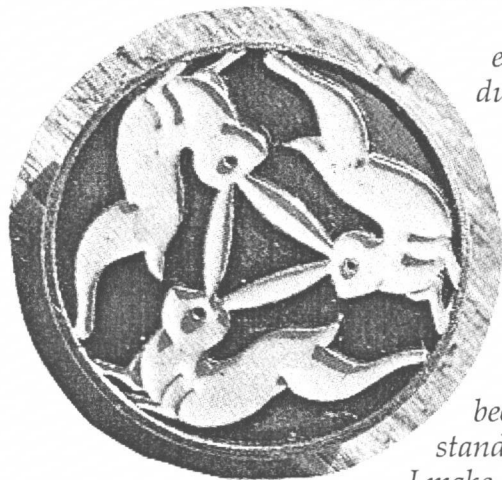
In it I can understand three aspects of divine being, which up to now did not seem to fit together. First, there is the aspect of the Father, the unfathomable



origin, from which all being comes. Second, I see the aspect of the Son as the personal side of the Great Spirit, as the side which is closest to us human beings and turned towards us.

Tradition also calls Christ the Logos, who was 'in the beginning with God', the Cosmic Christ. And there is the Holy Spirit, the non-personal side of the divinity, which reveals itself in the manifest world, which can be experienced by us through vital energy, which penetrates everything, that is the energetic aspect of God. That is how I am able to experience the 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' and I begin to understand. That this tradition uses male figures is unfortunate. But I think, nowadays, it is quite clear that 'Father' also means 'Mother' and transcends the sexes. And that the Holy Spirit, seen from its Hebrew origin, is female, will surely become more commonly known.

...The Trinity as a divine kaleidoscope, endlessly producing, procreating, and birthing trinities.



Finally I have found a Christian symbol that not only becomes understandable for me if I make a great effort,

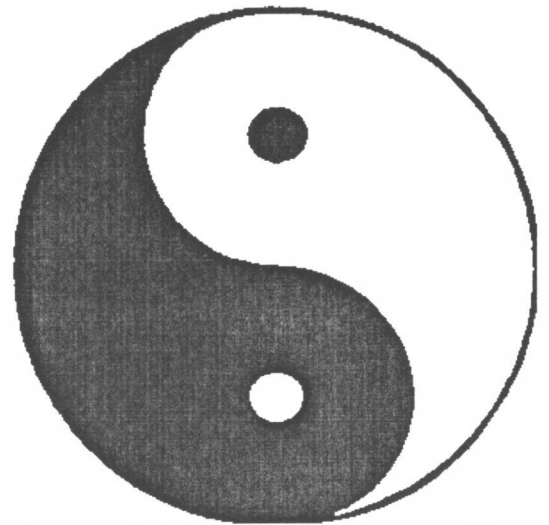
but that through itself makes it possible for me to understand my own spiritual experiences, which I did not have before...The three hares running in a circle symbolise a powerful dynamism of the Three...

(J. Wichmann: "Return from Unknown Gods. Re-Encounter With My Unloved Roots", Stuttgart 1992, 58 ff.).

In Taoism Yin and Yang have the following meaning:

Two important and basic motives in Chinese religion (Taoism) are those of continuity and change. Since the 7th Century BC, Chinese thinkers have begun to systematise transforming powers which are at work in the constant flow of the world. They used the terms Yang (which originally meant the sunny side of a hill) and Yin as names for the two principles which constantly influence each other. Yang is bright, hard and

male and Yin is his dark, soft, female counterpart. In Chinese thinking, though, the 'contrast' of Yin and Yang is not regarded as an absolute opposition. It is more a relative opposition of a dynamic and rhythmical kind, because both are only two phases of a constant change.



Their typical symbol is a circle with two differently coloured halves which flow into each other. In each circle there is a smaller circle of the other colour as a symbol of mutual penetration. Therefore, Yin and Yang can hardly be seen as a strictly dualistic and static relation. Yin and Yang represent the Tao meaning "of heaven and earth and the order of innumerable things." They are the Father and the Mother of change and transformation, the beginning and end of life and death and the source of the mysterious movements of light and darkness.

(The Inner Classics of the Yellow Emperor: Fundamental Questions)

Questions

1. Compare the Yin-Yang symbol with the hare symbol, which in old Christian churches depicts the Trinity. What do the two symbols tell you?
2. In what way is the mystery of the Trinitarian God a key for understanding reality?
 - a) for creation
 - b) for mankind
 - c) for the question of truth



Applications



Application

Read the following text:

For Chinese thought, and in a certain sense for oriental thought, the world is one, single, great living organism. Life penetrates everything and its nature is spiritual. It aims at goodness. For the Chinese, the universe and human life form a unity. They (the Chinese) experience this unity in an unbroken continuum, namely a Heaven-Man-Continuum. The Christian faith in China sees the Father as the Origin of all, the Son as the visible expression and the Spirit as the binding link.

The power of God fills all creation through the Risen Christ. The 'Heaven-Man-Continuum' has Jesus Christ as its foundation. The life of Christ in the universe is always pushing on flowing. It fills with its goodness all humanity and brings it to an always deeper communion. The Christianised soul of man-

kind cultivates its inner goodness according to the goodness which is given from heaven through Christ. It grows powerfully towards complete fullness of life. 'Christ-heaven' (we would perhaps say 'the cosmic Christ') achieves a harmony with humanity: people with each other in Christ, people and things harmonise in Christ.

Sister Grace Chu, FFM (Hong Kong) citing A.B. Chang, SJ, in *East Asian Pastoral Review* (1980), 3.

Question

How does this compare with your own image of God?



Application

The following text comes from Zaire and is an expression of the religion of the Baluba people:

The Baluba Creed

There is only one God.

He is Spirit. No one has created Him. He has created Himself.

Rather, He has created everything: the spirits, people, things, the world.

He is Immortal, and the spirits He has created are also immortal.

He is Omniscient. He knows everything and is like a door that sees who goes in and who goes out.

He is Omnipresent. He penetrates all things and is like the air that penetrates all things without being seen.

He is the Origin and the Foundation of all things. As Origin, He is like the water of the sea, the origin of salt. As Foundation, He is like a pillar on which the house rests.

He is the greatest Lord and, like the leopard, is Lord of the Forest.



He is Inexhaustible and Omnipotent. He is like a deep well that the rains cannot fill.

Like a Father, He loves His creation.

His Commandments bid us:

Not to kill.

Not to bewitch others.

Not to steal.

Not to commit adultery.

Not to calumniate.

To love and respect our parents.

God, the judge, has created four places:

Heaven, where He dwells with His spirits who have remained true to Him;

The great abyss, where He has hurled those spirits that revolted against Him, and to where people who are not true to Him will go;

The Earth, a temporary abode, where men are born and reborn time and time again;

The final City, where there are bananas in abundance. It is the final abode for people who have obeyed the Law of God.

Questions

1. What affinities can you discern between these texts and Franciscan spirituality?
2. What consequences can you draw for your missionary commitment?



Since Christianity began to speak about the triune God attempts were made to create images of this mystery of our faith. The fresco from the east Slovakian Parish Church (14th Century) shows three heads united to one body with two hands. The picture is an impressive step of a faithful search for the image of a God, who is incomprehensible and at the same time comprehensible, who lets Himself be touched, embraced, kissed, washed and anointed.

(M. Plate in "Christ in der Gegenwart", 1992)



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Picture Credits



Picture Credits

Cover St. Francis. Fresco, Pietro Lorenzetti, Lower Church of Assisi.

p. 3 Hare Window, Cathedral at Paderborn/Germany.

p. 6 Initial from a 13th Century Psalter.

p. 7 Fresco, Church in Urschalling/Germany.

p. 9 **Top:** Fresco from the Church of San Clemente, Tahull (Spain), around 1225.

Bottom: Wood-engraving by Sr. Christina Muelling.

p. 11 **Top:** Wood-carving at the portal of the Cathedral in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Bottom: Wood-engraving by W. Habdank.

p. 12 **Top:** Cosmic View of St. Hildegard of Bingen, 12th Century.

Bottom: Wood sculpture by an unknown artist from East Africa, 2nd half of 20th Century.

p. 13 From *Antonius Calendar* 5/94.

p. 14 Dossal (Detail), 13th Century, Basilica of St. Clare, Assisi.

p. 15 The Crib. Basilica of St. Clare, Assisi.

p. 16 Wood-engraving by Sr. Christina Muelling.

p. 18 **Left:** Painting on wood, 12th Century, Uffizi Museum, Florence.

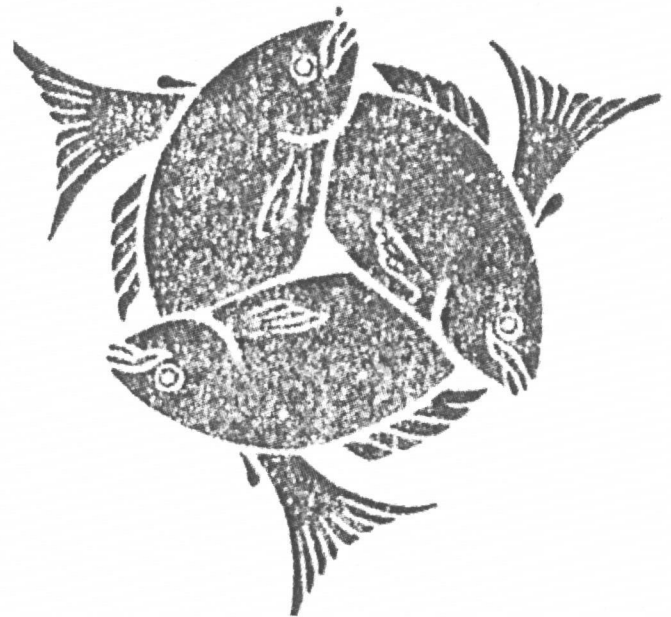
Right: Engraving by Adriaen Collaert following drawings by Adam van Oort (van Noort 1562-1641).

p. 22 **Left:** Yin-Yang-Symbol.

Right: Painted ceiling in the cave monastery of Dunhuang, Gansu Province, China.

p. 24 'Holy Trinity'. Fresco of the early Gothic Church 'Of the Holy Spirit' in Zehra/Slovakia, 14th. Century. From 'Christ in der Gegenwart', 1992.

p. 27 Linocut by Azariah Mbata (Detail).



The Coat of Arms of Holy Trinity Church at Stradford-upon Avon (where the great English writer William Shakespeare is buried) portrays three lively fish jumping around in a circle. The Holy Trinity is depicted by these three fish; consider the lively movement in this scene! Our God is not static and lonely. He is communication between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(Michael Zielonka)



For Reflection



We are three, You are three

When his ship stopped at a remote island for a day, the bishop was determined to use the time as profitably as possible. He strolled along the seashore and came across three fishermen attending to their nets. In Pidgin English they announced to him that centuries before they had been Christianised by missionaries. "We Christians!" they said, proudly pointing to one another.

The bishop was impressed. Did they know the Lord's Prayer? They had never heard of it. The bishop was shocked.

"What do you say, then, when you pray?"

"We lift eyes in heaven. We pray, 'We are three; You are three, have mercy on us.'"

The bishop was appalled at the primitive, the downright heretical nature of the prayer. So he spent the whole day teaching them the Lord's prayer. The fishermen were poor learners, but they gave it all they had and before the bishop sailed away the next day he had the satisfaction of hearing them go through the formula faultlessly.

Months later his ship happened to pass by those islands again and the bishop, as he paced the deck reciting evening prayer, recalled with pleasure the three men on that distant island who were now able to pray, thanks to his patient efforts.

Suddenly he saw a spot of light in the east that kept approaching the ship and, as he gazed in wonder, he saw three figures walking on the water. The captain stopped the boat and everyone leaned over the rails to see this sight.

They were the bishop's fishermen, of course.

"Bishop," they exclaimed, "we hear your boat go past and come hurry meet you."

"What is it you want?" asked the awe-stricken bishop.

"Bishop," they said, "we so, so sorry. We forget lovely prayer. We say: 'Our Father in heaven, holy be Your name, Your kingdom come...' then we forget. Tell us prayer again."

It was a chastened bishop who replied, *"Go back to your homes, my friends, and each time you pray, say, 'We are three, You are three, have mercy on us!'"*

Anthony de Mello

