

**DON BOSCO CENTER OF STUDIES**  
INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGICAL FORMATION  
Paranaque City, Philippines

**Author:** **Rev. Ramil V. Maranan, SDB**  
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**OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction
- II. Chapter One: Love as Life and Mission of the Trinity
  - A. God the Father: The Source of Love
  - B. Jesus Christ: The Incarnate Love of God
  - C. Holy Spirit: The Giver of Life
- III. Chapter Two: Humanity's Participation in the Trinitarian Love
  - A. Love of God and Love of Neighbor
  - B. Man's Participation in the Trinitarian Life and Mission
    - 1. Man as Image and Likeness of God
    - 2. Man as Steward of God's Creation
  - C. Sacraments as Signs of God's Love to Humanity
    - 1. Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
    - 2. Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick
    - 3. Sacraments of Communion and Mission: Holy Orders and Matrimony
- IV. Chapter Three: Church in Communion as Manifestation of Trinitarian Love
  - A. Church as Bearer of God's Love
  - B. Church as Builder of a Civilization of Love
  - C. Church as Missionary
  - D. The Church's Charitable Activity as a Manifestation of Trinitarian Love
    - 1. Love is Revealed in the Corporal and Spiritual Acts of Mercy
    - 2. Love is the Measure by which We are Judged
  - E. Mary's Participation in the Plan of Salvation
- V. Bibliography

*The text of the Introduction and Conclusion follows.*

## INTRODUCTION

**“To fall in love with God is the greatest romance;  
to seek him is the greatest adventure;  
to find him is the greatest human achievement.”**

*Saint Augustine of Hippo*

Man is created in the image and likeness of God who is Himself Love (see Gen 1:27; Jn 4:8, 16). God who created man out of love also calls him to love. God is love. To love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most difficult mysteries of our faith. And I believe that one of the best ways to explain the mystery of the Trinity is by using the concept of love. This is the most essential element of human existence; man cannot live without love. An experience of love is the only response to the longing of every human heart. It is akin to what Augustine expressed in a very famous statement at the start of his *Confessions*, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”<sup>2</sup>

In a very human and natural way, I believe that love is first lived and experienced in the family, and it is in this context that the person first becomes mature in love. Moreover, our faith teaches us that love enters silently and mysteriously into man’s life on the holy day of baptism, and yet it is a human and personal encounter that awakens, or reawakens, this beginning with the same gratuity through a gift of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Love is life-giving. God’s love is always life-giving. Love is the giving of His life itself. It is also the light — and in the end, the only light — that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world.<sup>4</sup> I believe that if there is one word that can summarize our Catholic faith, it is “Love.”

In this theological synthesis, it is my desire to present my reflection on the mystery of the Trinitarian Love which is God Himself — the object of all theological treatises. The Trinitarian Love is the Love that flows from the Holy Trinity — the Communion of Love.

Chapter One will be the presentation of the life and mission of the Trinity. This section is divided into three parts, the first is about God the Father, the Source of Love; second, is on Jesus Christ, the Beloved Son of the Father made incarnate; and the last on the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life — who is the Love between the Father and the Son. Simply put, the Source of love is the Father, and it comes to us in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two will delve on humanity’s participation in the life and mission of the Trinity. This section is divided into three major parts. The first is about the love of God and love of neighbor. The second is on man’s participation in the Trinitarian Life and Mission; this part will focus on man as image and likeness of God and man as steward of God’s creation. The third is about the formal Sacraments as concrete signs of God’s infinite love to humanity.

Chapter Three will dwell on the Communion in the Church as manifestation of Trinitarian Love. This section is divided into five parts. The first part is about the Church as a bearer of God’s love; the second part is about the Church as the builder of a civilization of love; and the third is about

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<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* (Rome 1992), no. 1604.

<sup>2</sup> *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Book I, trans. J.M. Lelen (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, 1997), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Livio Melina and Carl Anderson, *The Way of Love, Reflections of Pope Benedict XVI’s Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (United States: Ignatius Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (Rome 2005), no. 39.

the Church as missionary. The Church's charitable activity as a manifestation of the Trinitarian Love is discussed in the fourth part — Christ transforms us and renders us capable of loving in turn.<sup>5</sup> And as a consequence, the exercise of love of neighbor is the essential duty of the Church — of every believer in fact, of the entire ecclesial community at every level — as is also the proclamation of the Word and the administering of the sacraments.<sup>6</sup> That is why it is apt that this part also includes the Church's charitable activity as a manifestation of Trinitarian Love: the corporal and spiritual works of mercy — the concrete expression of Love. The chapter will end with Mary's participation in the plan of salvation, which will include a reflection on Mary as a model of charity.

## CONCLUSION

***“Studia di farti amare, piuttosto che farti temere.”***  
**(“Learn how to be loved, rather than feared.”)**

*Saint John Bosco*

The giving of the Good Shepherd cross is a custom and at the same time an essential part of the ceremony of the Salesian perpetual profession. At the back of this cross, we find the words of Don Bosco: “*Studia di farti amare,*” which means, “Learn how to be loved.” The *Salesian Constitutions* state that the nature and mission of the members of the society is “to be in the Church signs and bearers of God's love to the young.”<sup>7</sup> Like the Good Shepherd, every Salesian must always be willing to offer his life for his sheep.

Love is the most essential element of Don Bosco's spirituality and pedagogical system — for it entails sacrifice and the total dedication of oneself. For the good of the young, “we give generously of our time, talents, and health: ‘For your I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life.’”<sup>8</sup> As a Salesian of Don Bosco, I believe that I am called to love like the Good Shepherd — who searches for the last, the least, and the lost.

The Season of Lent is the time of preparation for Easter. We usually have the devotional practice of the Way of the Cross. It is an expression of love for Jesus. By doing this, we commemorate Christ's Paschal Mystery: Passion, Death, and Resurrection, and in every station of the Cross we proclaim, “*We adore you, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*” We remember the love and life-giving action of God for the whole of humanity. Because of Love, God the Father allowed His Son Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to willingly enter into the chaos of humanity so He can put us back in order and in peace, and grant us faith, hope, and love.

Jesus, the Immanuel is present to us in various ways — in the preaching of the Gospel, the contemplation of its mysteries, the celebration of the sacraments, the gathering of the community, and in compassionate and merciful service to others in His name. But what makes Jesus more concrete and visible in this world, and in our life, is when people love. The first letter of Paul to the members of the Church in Corinth describes the Gift of Love.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrong doing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now, I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., no. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., nos. 15–20.

<sup>7</sup> *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*, 3d ed. (Rome: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 2009), no. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., no. 14.

now faith, hope and love abided, these three; and the greatest of these is love (1 Cor 13:4–7; 12–13).

As Christians we hold love in the highest regard. For “it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in in this ministry, we do not lose heart” (2 Cor 4:1). I hope and pray that my life becomes an offering to God who is deserving of all my love.

As Salesians, we receive from our father and founder Don Bosco a system of education that concretely puts love into action. This system has the three essential elements: reason, religion, and loving kindness. These elements help us make Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Love of the Father, present and felt.

Christian love is to be the way in which we image God in this world through the community of believers — and not as isolated individuals. We are to call others into that community enfolded in the life of the Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — lover, beloved, and love in divine community. And so, what can love do in our life? It helps us to trust. From the life of Don Bosco, we know that he began many of his deeds with little or nothing at that; in the end, trust in divine providence never disappointed him. Because he loved God so much.

Trinitarian Love is the Love that flows from the inner life of God Himself. The Love of God the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is the Love that is always life-giving. Life is not the product of an accident; it is a gift! We have been created out of love and created for love. God loves unconditionally for His very essence is to love. And because man is created in the image and likeness of God, it means that every man is called to be a life-giver. As participants and partakers in the divine life, every person is also love, lover, and beloved.

Let me end this synthesis with an anecdote shared by Mother Teresa of Calcutta. One day there was a man who approached her and told her: “*I am an atheist,*” but he spoke beautifully about love. And so the humble St. Teresa told him: “*You cannot be an atheist if you speak so beautifully about love. Where there is love, there is God. God is love.*”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kolodiejchuk, Brian, *Where There is Love, There is God* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 7.