

THEOLOGY WITH A HEART*

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What kind of students of theology does the Church expect you to be? The theology students that the Church needs at this time are students who do theology with a heart, from the heart, in the heart. Our instrument for theologizing is not the brilliant intellect. Our tool for studying theology is the heart; not simply the heart which is the symbol of affectivity and emotion; but the heart which is the symbol of love. Let us do theology from a loving heart, with a loving heart, through love. In the end, faith, hope and love remain. The greatest of these is love.

Love is not a feeling. Love is an action word. If our theology is to be done with love, our theology must lead us to corresponding action. What actions? Three “G”s.

The first “G” is Give. The essence of love is giving. The Father gives the Son. The Father and the Son give the Spirit—and the giving continues on and on. There can be no real loving without giving. The greatest love is self-giving. People who do not give do not be-

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come richer. They die early. They die even if they are still breathing. They die even if they are still alive.

Theology should make us giving persons. It is only in being giving persons that we can do sound theology. The object of theology is God. God is love. The proof of love is giving. There is no greater love than to give our lives for our enemies.

The second “G” is Gather. To gather is to unite, to make one, to destroy the differences that divide us and make those differences tools for helping and complementing one another. Theology students have a tendency to compete. When you put “L” in the middle of compete, it becomes complete. Theology from the heart must complete us, make us one. Theology is not for competition but for completion, so that all may be one.

Diabolical is the one who destroys the unity of the Body of Christ. Diabolical is the antithesis of God. Unity and theology must go together if theology is indeed the science of God.

It is not our nature to scatter. It is our nature to gather as one. We cannot claim to be loving persons and yet not work to bring about unity. It is love that makes a man and woman one heart, one body, one soul. It is love that makes possible the “communion” between God and humankind in the Holy Eucharist.

The third “G” is Go. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit reach out to us and bring us out of darkness into light. Now that we have been brought to light, it is now our duty to go where darkness is, not to slide back, but to bring light to many others living without the light.

The Church by her very nature is missionary because God by his very nature is also a going forth God. Love is not a self-indulgent exercise. It is only in living for others that we can truly live for God. The modern name of God is “others.” Theology should lead us from self to others.

In this task of going and proclaiming, the most important tool is witnessing. Francis used to tell his friars on missionary journeys: “Go

and preach the Gospel. Talk if necessary.” The most important component in preaching is going out and bearing witness, not going out and talking.

Theology from the heart, in the heart and with the heart means theology for giving, gathering and going.

A priest friend of mine engaged in the media apostolate told me this story last Holy Week.

He was assigned to take photos of a parish soup kitchen for Church documentation. Under the heat of the noontime sun, there they were—three hundred coupon-carrying poor people queuing for their lunch for the day. A few meters away from the line were four kids led by the eldest among them who looked like she was around twelve years old. The eldest motioned the three to stay together under the shade. She fell in line to get a lunch box. She had no coupon. When the three hundredth box had been given, the little girl was before an empty service table. She had no coupon to entitle her to a lunch box. The volunteer food distributor pitied her and gave her a banana. The little girl’s eyes brightened up. She ran back to her three siblings waiting under the shade. The four children prayed together over the banana. The eldest peeled the fruit and divided it into three. She gave each of her siblings a piece of banana. Left with nothing but the banana peel, the eldest girl just licked with gusto the inside of the banana peel.

My priest friend shared with me his regrets. He was not able to take a photo of that scene. His eyes were swelling with tears. He knew that he was looking at Jesus. It was too sacred to be captured by his camera.

That was theology with a heart—a giving, gathering and going theology. I pray for you. May people see you and see no longer you but Jesus glowing through you. The favorite place of God is the heart. The best way to study theology is through love.