

**Paper Response: John D. Dadosky, “Ecclesia de Trinitate: Ecclesial Foundations from Above” Lonergan Project Colloquium, November 3, 2011**

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I first want to thank Father Doran and the organizers of this year’s Lonergan Project Colloquium for having me here, and I want to thank John Dadosky for his thought-provoking paper. It is possible to respond in a hundred different ways, each tending in a different direction. I would like to focus on one issue in particular. That issue is the concept of *invisibility* or, to be more precise, how our discussion of the invisible work of God must be accompanied by constant recourse to God’s *visible* self-presence to us in the Incarnation and the Church. My hope is that my comments further the conversation occurring here at the colloquium.

In his paper, Dadosky argues for a fourfold distinction with respect to the economic missions of the Son and of the Spirit: “the visible missions of the Son and the Spirit that give birth to the Church and its mission in history” on the one hand, and “the invisible missions of the Son and the Spirit that are operative outside of the explicit Church” on the other.<sup>1</sup> This fourfold sensibility is riven in half by a distinction between visibility and invisibility. Thus the question of how we as Christians understand the invisible work of the Spirit, now further complicated by Dadosky’s suggestions regarding the invisible work of the Son, is a central one.

To enrich his argument, it would be helpful if Dadosky further clarified what he means by visible and invisible. He applies the former term to what is “inside the Church grounding its nature and directing its mission,” and the latter to what is

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<sup>1</sup> Dadosky, “A proposal,” 18.

“outside the explicit Church.”<sup>2</sup> Dadosky’s usage is drawn from that of Fredrick Crowe.<sup>3</sup> What does it mean, though, for the explicit, visible Church to encounter the Son and the Spirit invisibly, and what then does that imply about what it means to *be* Church? Dadosky hints that our theology of baptism must shift,<sup>4</sup> and that we are able to emphasize anew our cooperation with grace.<sup>5</sup> I would like to contribute to this question with a consideration of the visible characteristics of faith.

Christianity is a faith founded on the Incarnation, on the Word taking flesh and dwelling among us. There is thus a profound emphasis on the visibility of faith: on faith increasingly “taking flesh” in words and deeds, and on the physicality of the sacraments. These are all, in Dadosky’s parlance, “ad intra” concerns, to be distinguished from his “ad extra” theory.<sup>6</sup> But what is *ad intra* here informs how we approach what is *ad extra*: that faith is fleshly, visible, and Christic. This is not to say that faith is self-explanatory, empirical, or without mystery, nor indeed does it say that Christ’s humanity takes precedence over his divinity. It is, rather, to say that the mysterious God has shown himself to us in Christ, and while this compounds God’s mysteriousness, it also permits us to live viscerally in the midst of that mysteriousness: bound up, as it were, in the sacraments. “The Eucharist, in

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<sup>2</sup> Dadosky, “A proposal,” 19.

<sup>3</sup> “Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions,” in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea* (Washington, D.C., CUA Press, 1989): 324-343. Cf. Dadosky, “A proposal,” 6. This usage also draws from Lonergan’s use of “inner” and “outer” word, to be found in *The Triune God: Systematics*, 744, which draws from Aquinas’s *Divinum personarum*.

<sup>4</sup> Dadosky, “A Proposal,” 6-7. “...given that the Church now recognizes that there is the possibility of sanctifying grace (i.e. an invisible or universal mission of the Spirit) outside of its explicit presence (*Lumen Gentium* II, 16), and given that it recognizes in the documents of Vatican II that membership and participation in the creed, life and liturgy of the Church is de facto not a guarantor of salvation...then there is a precedent for revisiting and clarifying the sacrament of baptism in its relationship to the mission and membership in the Church.”

<sup>5</sup> Dadosky, “A proposal,” 11-13.

<sup>6</sup> Dadosky, “A proposal,” 1. Cf. John D. Dadosky, “Towards a Fundamental RE-Interpretation of Vatican II.” *Heythrop Journal*, 49 (September, 2008): 742-763.

particular,” writes Hans Urs von Balthasar, “is the adaptation of our being to God by the descent of the Word into our senses, indeed, into our substance, which is something even below the senses. Not only does Spirit speak to spirit, but Flesh speaks to flesh.”<sup>7</sup>

The Word’s descent into flesh demands a similar “descent” on the part of responding faith: that faith must become increasingly explicit, especially through graced words and deeds.<sup>8</sup> The embodiment of faith is, while not peculiar to Christianity, vital to Christianity in a unique way because of the Incarnation.<sup>9</sup> We embody *Christ*.

The embodiment of faith requires conversion: here I mean more than “making faith explicit,” but rather a turning of the heart and a transfiguration. For Bernard Lonergan, conversion is included in the various levels of consciousness,<sup>10</sup> and Robert Doran adds a conversion of psychic consciousness.<sup>11</sup> “Conversion,” writes Lonergan, “is from unauthenticity to authenticity. It is total surrender to the demands of the human spirit: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love.”<sup>12</sup>

What is implicit in Lonergan’s definition is the interruptive quality of conversion: to turn to something also means to turn away from something else.

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<sup>7</sup> Balthasar, *GL I*, 401. Cf. *GL VII*, 150-152 (cruciformity and eucharist); *TD V*, 471-478 (“Meal and Marriage”). See also Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 12: “The real novelty of the New Testament lies not so much in new ideas as in the figure of Christ himself, who gives flesh and blood to those concepts—an unprecedented realism.”

<sup>8</sup> There is consistent New Testament logic, for example, in the dictum “Every good tree bears good fruit” (Mt 7:17; cf Mt 7:16; 12:33; Lk 6:44; Ja 3:12).

<sup>9</sup> See Balthasar, *TL II*, 221: “The Christian religion is the only one that, overlooking the supremely evident fact of the mortality of the flesh...has found in the flesh, in the mortal, Eucharistic, mystical, resurrecting flesh, the unsurpassable end of the ways of God.”

<sup>10</sup> See especially Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 267-269.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Doran, *Subject and Psyche*.

<sup>12</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, 268.

When it comes to the invisible workings of the Spirit, who surely opens the human heart and prepares it to welcome Christ,<sup>13</sup> we must ask what role *interruption* plays in the movement from the secret operation of prevenient grace to the fullness of (visible) ecclesial grace. Conversion helps us to see how urgent it is to work out more fully how the invisible and visible are and are not related to one another. Is there room here for a disruptive distance that is involved in conversion, even as we focus on enabling dialogue? Must we not presuppose such a distance in the midst of dialogue?

Distance might be a helpful concept to develop here, and here I point to Hans Urs von Balthasar's discussion of "distance."<sup>14</sup> *Distance* for von Balthasar emphasizes both difference and likeness at the same time. This complex simultaneity of difference and likeness inherent in distance means that, as we recollect the disruptive qualities of conversion, distance might help us to account for the turn of heart of conversion without denying a certain continuity in the person before and after conversion. Perhaps von Balthasar's distance would be a helpful complement to Dadosky's use of the mutual indwelling of Trinitarian Persons as an analogy for dialogue. Here unfortunately I only have the time to suggest such an option, but I am hopeful it will prove useful.

To conclude: our inquiries into God's activities outside of the Church must have recourse to God's *visible* self-presence to us in the Incarnation and the Church.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. CDF, "Doctrinal Note on some Aspects of Evangelization," 4; Thomas Aquinas, ST I-II, q. 109, a.1, ad. 1.

<sup>14</sup> See *TD* II especially, but also *GL* VII. Ricoeur's use of the concept might also prove immensely beneficial. Distance would not necessarily be opposed to Dadosky's interest in the mutual indwelling of the Trinitarian persons, but it would certainly condition that interest.

I am concerned that such recourse be maintained, and with a thoroughness that allows us to deny certain uses of *visibility* and *invisibility* as problematic while we affirm other uses as helpful. The disruptive character of grace pushes us to consider anew what is involved in the leap of faith, and whether and where our discussions of God's invisible work must be nuanced (nuanced perhaps with the concept of distance) to account for grace's purgative action.