

REJOICING IN HEAVEN

Rejoicing in heaven can conjure up a picture of the angel saints watching what we do and when one of us turns over a new leaf, abandons selfishness and sin, a large cheer goes up. Way to go. Come on Aussie, come on. Hang in there. Keep doing what you are doing.

Religious art abounds with images of God looking angry and full of wrath, ready to hurl from the divine presence those who have sinned. Where are the images of the Trinity smiling with joy, giving high fives, as one of us repents of sin? There are pictures of Jesus as the good shepherd carrying a sheep as we have in St Agatha's in the stain glass window on the western side. But that does not capture it well.

When we are in need of being found we have deliberately gone our own way. A sheep wanders here and there looking for food. It can be separated from the mob, get lost in a gully but it is a sheep following its instinct. A sheep does not weigh the situation up and make a conscious choice. We, on the other hand, can and do make conscious choices. We become lost when we tell God we can do very well by ourselves, we need no guidance from the Trinity, we can plot our own course, do our own thing. And we can. But always at a cost and a loss.

Human beings are created by one who is infinite and self-existing. Infinite sounds very big and it is easy for us to think God is just a very, very big version of our ourselves. But God is completely other and without beginning or end. We are created in the image of God so at the core of our being is a longing for the infinite, for what is without end. We have an in-built longing for God and without God we are constantly dissatisfied. We try to fill the longing with power, wealth, pleasure, honour (to quote St Ignatius Loyola) but all those things have an end. The cost we incur when we do our own thing is ongoing dissatisfaction. The loss is our own identity. We think we are making ourselves but without God we always fall short.

Into this situation comes the creating loving Trinity showing mercy and love. God has not created us to be thrown away like some object with a use by date, planned obsolescence. We exist as the result of an act of non-violent love. We blossom as we do the same. And when we do the same, there is rejoicing in heaven because we have found our true selves and our restlessness put at ease because our hearts now rest in the infinite depths of God.

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