

On August 17, 2003, Father Seán Ólaoire gave the following Sophia Homily about Valentin Tomberg and the Luminous Trinity to his congregation of Companions on the Journey in Palo Alto, California. Fr. Seán Ólaoire is a Catholic priest, ordained in 1972. Born in Ireland, he was awarded a B.Sc. degree (major in Mathematics) from the National University of Ireland. He spent 14 years in East Africa working in Education, Agriculture, Preventive Medicine, Famine Relief, Architecture and also with physically disabled children. He is multi-lingual and has an M.A. and a Ph. D. in transpersonal psychology. He is a co-founder and the Spiritual Director of a group of Bay Area Catholics, called "Companions on the Journey", who are attempting to find "a new way of being truly Catholic." He is, also, a Licensed Clinical Psychologist with a private counseling practice in Los Altos. He lectures and conducts scientific research on the effects of prayer.

SOPHIA HOMILY

17 August 2003

Valentin Tomberg was a Russian esotericist, and if that's not enough of a jawbreaker for you, his specialty was Sophiology. He lived between 1900 and 1973 and his real interest throughout his entire life was Sophiology: the study of the wisdom traditions of all the great world's spiritualities. Sophia is the Greek word for wisdom. He was an extraordinary genius who culled the world's great spiritual traditions East and West in order to try to understand the wisdom of God. And by the wisdom of God, he meant in particular, the feminine face of God. He studied all the systems of spirituality, in all epochs of all regions of the planet. He looked at the ancient Greeks and the cult of Athena hundreds of years before Christ. He looked at Egypt and the cult of Isis and at Mesopotamia and the cult of Astarte, and he looked at the early Christian tradition, at the cult of Mary, and he created a beautiful system. I want to talk about him today, to highlight his thinking and then to build on it and go off on a direction of my own, because today in the first reading from the Hebrew Scriptures we have the notion of wisdom. Wisdom is a very strong tradition in the Hebrew system. It is the Shekinah, the feminine face of God. Then in the third reading Christ speaks about Eucharist, which is an extraordinarily feminine symbol. So I want to pull those together today. I am going to make three main points today. The first I will call Sophia's Choice, the second: Anything God Can Do You Can Do Too, and thirdly: This Is My Body, This Is Your Body.

Sophia's Choice

I want to speak of the core of Valentin Tomberg's thesis about Sophiology and build on it myself, creating themes of my own from it. Like many great spiritual teachers Valentin Tomberg understood that God is a totally ineffable, un-understandable mystery. God is totally beyond human ken. At some stage, this God, in order to understand Itself creates the first duality. This duality has a transcendent aspect and an immanent aspect, or a male and a female aspect, or an aspect of God, which is totally beyond creation, and an aspect of God that is creation. This was an effort on behalf of the totally ineffable God to experience Itself by creating the first duality. So the first duality is the utter transcendence of God and the total immanence of God. Both of these aspects are equally God.

Now where Tomberg comes in is this. He believed that these two parts, the immanent and the transcendent, each created a Trinity. The first one, we're familiar with, we all learned it as kids. The transcendent God has Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and many times I've told you what my theory on this Trinity is. The Father represents God's Isness, the Isness of transcendence. The Son, the second person or Logos (the Greek term for Word) represents the Transcendent God's total self-understanding. The light that God sheds on the mystery of Himself, this is the Logos, the Word, the second person of the male version of the trinity. The Holy Spirit represents the extraordinary love that God has for who He knows Himself to be. That, then, is the male version of the trinity.

The great insight of Tomberg was that there is a female trinity as well. The immanence of God also represents Itself in three parts. Why would the duality need to further split into three? My theory is this: in order for God to be available for relationship, God had to totally understand the mystery of Himself. In order for God to be totally available for relationship God had to fully understand the mystery of Herself. The male trinity is an effort on behalf of the transcendent God to so totally understand Himself so that He is fully available for relationship with the immanence. The trinity of the female part is an effort on behalf of the immanent God to so totally understand Herself so that She is fully available for relationship with the transcendence.

The feminine divides itself into three parts says Tomberg; the Divine Mother, the Divine Daughter and what he calls the Holy Soul. Now I'm going to put my words on it.

The Divine Mother represents the stuff of creation. Since the immanence of God is God as creation and is no less God than the transcendent aspect of God then the Divine Mother represents the first person of this trinity, as far as I am concerned. The Divine Mother is literally the stuff of creation. She is the helium and the hydrogen and all of the chemical elements that went into this extraordinary physical cosmos of ours. Mother represents that. We find this in our own language all the time: mother and matter are exactly the same root, or mother and material. All stuff comes from the motherhood of God; the Divine Mother represents the stuff of creation.

The Divine Daughter (my hit on it) represents the total understanding that the Divine Mother has of Herself. She is the light that She shines on Herself in order to fully appreciate the mystery of Her own being. The Divine Daughter who is sometimes called Sophia or wisdom is the feminine aspect of God throwing light on Itself to fully understand Its own mystery so as to be available for relationship with the transcendence.

The Holy Soul, in my language, is the energy of this creation. So where the mother is the stuff of creation, the Divine Daughter is the intelligence or light behind creation and the Holy Soul is the energy of the creation.

Tomberg goes on to claim that these second persons in both of the trinities incarnated, or intersected with the human experiment at some stage. The second person of the male trinity, the Logos or the Word incarnated into the body of a human being, a man called Jesus who was a carpenter and lived in Nazareth. According to Tomberg that happened when Jesus was twenty-nine years and nine months of age. It happened when he was being baptized in the River Jordan by John. God on that occasion says, "This is my beloved son, in Him I am well pleased. Listen to him". According to Tomberg, this was the moment of incarnation. The incarnation did not happen at conception, the incarnation did not happen at any other time, it happened when finally the second person of the trinity, the logos or the word incarnated in the person of a thirty year old man, a carpenter from Galilee and took up occupancy there, thus creating for the first time ever, Christ consciousness within that individual.

Tomberg goes on to claim that the same thing happened in the other trinity, that the second person of the female trinity, Sophia or wisdom incarnated just a few years later in the person of Mary, the mother of Jesus at the moment of Pentecost.

Therefore she took on Christ consciousness at that moment.

Now building on these two theories, I'm going to give you an esoteric version of Einstein's formula for relativity: $E = mc^2$. If, as my opinion suggests, the Holy Soul literally represents the energy of the created universe, She is "E". Since the Divine Mother is the stuff of creation and in physics, mass literally means the amount of matter in an object, She represents "m" in the equation. Then you've got "c" multiplied by "c". "C" is the speed of light; light is another word for understanding intelligence. The light that we bring to bear on the subject is the intelligence that we have to deal with the subject. So, when the second person of the male trinity, God's total self understanding, the light that the transcendent God shone on Himself to fully understand his own mystery, when you bring that together with the intelligence of creation, the light that the feminine version of God, Sophia shines on Herself in order to fully understand how creation needs to happen—you multiply them by each other and by the Divine Mother (who supplies the material) and You've got $E = mc^2$. I don't know if Einstein fully realized what he was doing or not. He thought he was talking about the physical world, and in a sense, he was, but there was a mystery away beyond that. That is; the energy of the experiment of which we are a part is the stuff of the immanent aspect of God, the female face of God, Her self-understanding intersecting with the transcendence of God and there you have the extraordinary mystery of life in the cosmos a we know it. That's my first point.

Anything God Can Do, You Can Do Too.

So, is this a mystery, which is just peculiar to the extraordinary, ineffable godhead? I don't believe it for a moment. I believe that this was the choice and bifurcation and duality that every single one of us created in order to fully experience ourselves. For every single one of us there is a transcendent and an immanent aspect of ourselves. Every single one of us is soul stuff, a transcendent dimension away beyond physicality and since every single one of us is a human being, a spirit in a space suit, there is very obviously an immanent aspect of us as well. So in every human being the same extraordinary experiment continues to unfold, and there is a trinity, on both sides of that, it seems to me.

When we are pure souls before we take on these space suits and come on a mission to planet earth, there is a trinitarian aspect to ourselves. Firstly, there is the Isness of your soul, its very essence and being. Then there is the extraordinary light of intelligence, the self-understanding of that entity, which we spend eons of time trying to deal with and come to grips with in our disincarnate form. Then there is the love we have for whom we discover ourselves to be. Then we incarnate, we take on an immanence. The immanence has the same trinitarian formula. When you decide to incarnate, you need mother stuff, you are going to search around for carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen and you are going to fashion a space suit for yourself. That is the Divine Mother in the immanent part of you. Then you are going to have to try to understand what it means to be a human being. You are going to have to put on the second person of the trinity, the feminine face of God, to try to understand what it means to be a human being on safari on planet earth. The third part of it, when you've really reached it, is to love what you find. Not in the sense of just denying the shadow material but in totally embracing the mission you are on and the experiment you have signed up for. These two constantly intersect with each other. Every time the transcendent penetrates the immanent a new life comes onto planet earth. I don't think it necessarily happens at conception, it may happen several weeks into the evolution of the

fetus, but every time the transcendent penetrates into this dimension, a new life enters Experiment Planet Earth. Every time the immanent penetrates the transcendent a person dies. Except I don't believe in death. Death is the shuffling off of this mortal coil, because the mission is finished and we go off back where home really is and this happens in the cycle of every single life, again and again and again. Every single one of us is the result of the masculine or transcendent aspect of soul penetrating the immanence of creation and therefore a new life, a new experiment gets birthed onto planet earth. When our mission is complete the immanence penetrates the transcendence and we go back where we belong. This mystery happens again and again and again. It did not just happen in the infinite godhead, it did not just happen with Jesus Christ and it did not just happen with Mary. It happens in the quickening of every little baby, conceived, birthed and living on planet earth. So every thing God can do, you can do too. In fact you are expected to and if you are not doing it, you haven't fully understood who you are.

This Is My Body, This Is Your Body.

Part of the difficulty in Christ's preaching to the crowd is this: no matter how much God inspires an individual, God is still at the mercy of the pathology of the individual to express and articulate the insight and of the listeners to receive it. No matter how clear a revelation of God is to an individual person, it will be filtered through the biases of this individual. You see this happening even with the prophets. No matter how much God will speak a truth to the prophet, the prophet will articulate it according to his own personal prejudices or biases or pathologies. So, stumblingly we move forward. The same thing happens when God inspires an entire culture. Whether it is the culture of the Israelites or the culture of America or the culture of the Catholic Church. Every time God inspires a culture, God is still at the mercy of the pathology of the culture. No matter what extraordinary insights come through any tradition, they will always be filtered through the prejudices and biases of that particular tradition. We find this in the Bible; we find it in every church. So God continues to refine the truth by revealing to more and more institutions and more and more cultures and more and more people so that by cross fertilization we get to the core and we shuffle off the merely superficial cultural addenda. God is hamstrung in some senses by the material with which She is working, so God creates spiritual bypasses occasionally. This is the point for me of the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand in the desert today, with physical food and then going on to invite them to the deeper mystery. Christ doesn't explain food to people, he gives them food. There is no point in trying to explain to somebody what food tastes like, better that they have the experience themselves.

There is a great scene in the movie City of Angels where Nicholas Cage is an angel in human form, except he doesn't have emotions and he has never had a fully human experience. He is having a relationship with Meg Ryan who is a surgeon and he is trying to find out what it is like to be a human being (she doesn't know he is an angel). She has a pear and is about to cut it. He asks her a very strange question, "What does a pear taste like?" An angel has never tasted anything, an angel is pure intelligence, it doesn't have sensorium and it doesn't have emotions, so it is wondering, "What is it actually like to eat a pear?" So he says to her, "What does a pear taste like?" She says, "You don't know what a pear tastes like?" and he recovers very quickly and says, "I don't know what a pear tastes like to you." Christ realized there is no point in trying to teach people what a pear tastes like, there is no point in trying to teach people what food tastes like. You've got to feed people and let them taste it for themselves. Once they have tasted the food, then you can invite them into the mystery behind the mere tasting. Having fed this five thousand people, he now invites them to go deeper. Those who were ready to go deeper went deeper and those that weren't ready to go

deeper just got upset with him. Christ, as Moses had done twelve hundred and eighty years before him, fed a huge crowd in the desert. The same thing happened with Moses, the crowd objected and were angry with him. Similarly, the crowd objected and was angry with Jesus. When Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you do not have life in you", they said, "This is a ridiculous conversation, who can hear this?" and they went away and walked no more with him. So Christ had fed their bodies, he'd fed their taste buds and he was trying to find out who of those among them were at a stage of their evolution, of their spiritual advancement, where they could understand what he was really doing. Most of them just tasted the physical bread and the physical fish and then they walked away complaining. Those who were advanced enough realized that they hadn't just tasted physical bread and fish, they had tasted a mystery and they went away utterly transformed. I am totally convinced that many of those listening to Jesus that day were reincarnated souls from the time of Moses and that they hadn't advanced a whole lot and that they still had the same reaction to Jesus that they had to Moses. They were upset with him and they walked away complaining. A few souls had advanced in the interim and these souls got what Christ was really saying. These ones got it, they realized there was a mystery to be tasted here that was much more important than the apparent surface meaning of it.

Let me dig into it, what was that mystery? When Christ said, "I am the living bread that comes down from heaven" of whom was he speaking? Was he only speaking about Jesus the carpenter from Nazareth in whom God had incarnated a few years previously at his baptism? Was he talking only about his mother who would have Sophia incarnate within her in a few short years, or was he talking about every single one of us? Can you say as Christ said, "I am the bread of life come down from heaven", because if you can't, you still haven't understood the mystery? You are still being fed only with your taste buds. You are only using your sensorium to try to engage a mystery, and you cannot engage a mystery with your sensorium any more than you can engage a mystery with your mind. The mystery can only be engaged at the level of soul and the level of heart. When Christ said, "I am the living bread come down from heaven", he is not making this statement of himself. Jesus of Nazareth is not making this statement of himself; he is inviting everybody with eyes to see and hearts to understand that every single one of us is bread come down from heaven. Every single one of us has done what Jesus Christ has done. Every single one of us is an incarnation from the transcendence of God into the immanence of God. Until we get that, we'll keep coming back and we'll keep complaining no matter how much bread we are fed by how many teachers over however many reincarnations. We will keep complaining until we finally get it that we too can say with Christ, "I am the living bread come down from heaven." When Christ says, "I give my flesh for the life of the world", what does this mean? Christ was prepared to give his flesh for the life of the world, but I think there are three possible interpretations here. Firstly, Christ needed flesh in order to experience planet earth. He is saying, "to experience life on earth, I need flesh" and so he is signing up for incarnation. Every single one of us signed up for incarnation, every single one of us gives our flesh for the life of the world. Without our flesh there is no life for us on the world. So the entry point of incarnation is to accept flesh so as to experience life on the world. A second possibility: through incarnation we help the world to evolve. By taking flesh every single one of us helps planet earth to continue to move ahead. So in that sense he gives his life for the life of the world. A third sense, perhaps, is to be prepared to die. Christ is not saying, "I'm going to hang on a cross for the world". He is saying, "I will accept every aspect of the human experience, up to and including my demise in order to help this extraordinary

experiment along". Every single one of us needs to be able to say the same thing. Every single one of us is meant to accept every part of the flesh, every part of this life experience so that the planet itself may continue to evolve. When Christ finally says, "Just as the father who has life gave life to me and I give this life to you", what did he mean by that? I'm going to give you my final heresy of the day and it's this: I think Christ is saying, "God has life, God gave me this life, I give you this life". What does it mean that God has life? I think it means that God developed Christ consciousness and God did this by shining the light of the Logos on the mystery of the Himself, and God did this by shining the light of Sophia on the mystery of Herself. God, too, had to develop Christ consciousness and God developed Christ consciousness through the second person of the male and female trinities. At some stage in the mystery God gave life to the son. God through the second person of the male trinity and the second person of the female trinity intersected with the human experiment in the person of a carpenter from Nazareth, and Christ consciousness came to the human race for the first time. In the person of Mary the mother of Jesus, Christ consciousness came to the human race a second time, and it happened within a few short years of each other. Christ's final injunction was this, "So this is the life that I give to you", the life that the father/mother has, the Christ consciousness of God which then God bestowed on the Word and on the Sophia, the Christ figure and the Mary figure—that is the very same life I give to you. Every single one of us then is meant to develop the same kind of Christ consciousness. Every single one of us is on planet Earth as part of the experiment of the intersection of the light God shone on himself and the light God shone on Herself. In order for a mystery to be born onto planet Earth, it takes many, many mothers. It takes many mothers to conceive a mystery, to carry a mystery, to birth a mystery, to nurture a mystery, and to offer a mystery to the world. There have been many, many teachers before us. My question to you and to myself today is this: are you ready, whether you are a male or a female, of transcendence or of immanence, are you ready to donate a womb and breasts to conceiving, carrying, birthing, nurturing and offering the next stage of this mystery to planet Earth?