

**Reflection on the Gospel- Trinity Sunday Year A
(John 3:16-18)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

"She has gone to God and God is very near". Some dear friends of mine chose these words for the cover of their mother's funeral booklet. Their choice of words demonstrates their faith in God of whom John writes in today's gospel. For them, as for us, God is not a distant God, but rather a God *of* communion, and a God *in* communion with the world: "God so loved the world...." John uses the term "world" here to refer to humanity in need of salvation. Jesus is the one through whom the world is saved, the one through whom God gives "eternal life" (*zoē aiōnios*), literally "life of the age". "Eternal life" or "life of the age" is not referring to ordinary life (*psychē*), but to a share in God's life that has no beginning and no end. The whole gospel was written that we "may have life (*zoē*)", the life that has no end (John 20:31).

Nothing in John's gospel should be read in isolation from the whole. Our passage forms part of Jesus' dialogue with a Pharisee called Nicodemus who recognizes that Jesus is "of God". Jesus leads Nicodemus from a basic and fairly literal understanding to new understandings about what it means to be in relationship with God. The need to be "born of the Spirit" is part of the conversation that forms the context for the three verses chosen for today's gospel. Trinitarian language pervades John's gospel and is present elsewhere in the Christian scriptures, almost certainly reflecting the incipient belief of the earliest communities that God is one, as Jewish faith asserts, and at the same time three-in-one. This belief was to develop over the subsequent centuries into the doctrine of the Trinity which is at the very heart of Christian faith.

Perichoresis, a Greek term suggestive of dancing or of figures interweaving, is one of the earliest images for this Trinitarian life of God. The life that is in God is three and yet one in a totally harmonious dance of equals. The wonder is that we are invited to join the dance. Trinity Sunday is the day that we set aside to celebrate who God is in Godself and who God is in relation to the whole of creation. We celebrate the nearness of the Triune God who draws us as participants into the dance of life and love. We hear later in John's gospel that the Spirit of truth guides us "into all the truth". We continue to listen to the Spirit so that we might understand more fully the "things that are to come" and the relatedness we are called to live. The dance of Trinitarian love casts out hatred and enmity and wanton destruction and calls us to live in harmony with one another and with all of God's creation. With Covid-19 affecting the entire human community, we reflect anew on what it means to "have the life of the age" and to live in loving communion with one another and with the natural world.