

TRINITY, TRAUMA AND TRANSFORMATION. A TRINITARIAN PASTORAL THEOLOGY
REFLECTED IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHAPLAINS AT THE TEMPORARY
MORTUARY AT GROUND ZERO

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It was 8pm on a New York Friday night, 10 days after September 11th 2001. I had just arrived at 'D- Mort,' the Medical Examiners Morgue to do my first shift there as a chaplain. There I was - an Episcopal priest. I had been a hospital chaplain for eight years, during that time as a psychiatric chaplain had worked with suicidal and homicidal persons for six years, had trained about fifty seminarians as a Clinical Pastoral Education supervisor, had just started my second year of psychoanalytic training for my doctoral program, had spent five of the last ten days at the 9/11 Family Assistance Centers at the Armory and Pier 94 serving the families and working with others on death notification teams. Five days before I had preached to a Cathedral congregation of over 500 about Jesus standing with Mary and Martha after Lazarus had died and had wondered aloud with them about how close we let ourselves come to the tomb. Now here I was standing at the face of the tomb and I realized I did not know what to do. It was not that I did not know how to engage in pastoral crisis intervention but I did not know what to do to process this event in myself.

It is in the face of such situations that our pastoral training and our professional development holds us or deserts us. It is in the most difficult moments of ministry we see what it is that holds us, sustains us and enables us to be with others in their deep trauma. What is it that enables a forensic chaplain to sit and listen to a man who has murdered his wife and children without being overwhelmed by horror in hearing the gruesome details that he shares in his dissociated state? How does the rabbi not get caught up in her own anger in hearing the suicidal person whose hidden trauma is not the previously undisclosed rape but the interpretation of being cursed by God due to a Shabbat School teacher who said that God would do so if she left the synagogue? What is it that enables a psychiatric chaplain to sit with a psychotically depressed mother, who after her latest suicide attempt describes her experience of her baby falling apart in her arms as she is falling apart in her mind? How does the pastoral psychotherapist work with the patient raped on Good Friday whilst on Church business who experiences transformation in therapy through psychically killing off not only the rapists but also himself? How did the chaplains minister at Ground Zero, with the smell of death pungent in their nostrils, whilst fires continued to burn underground, as they were called onto 'the pile,' or later down into 'the pit' to bless a body or body part that may have belonged to the son, brother or 'brother in arms' of the person standing next to them, whilst 300 fire, police and construction workers stood silent, helmets off, waiting to hear their prayers ring out over the site?

All these are graphic examples of the kind of suffering humans experience throughout their lives and the kind of experience hospital and prison chaplains, pastoral psychotherapists and disaster response chaplains encounter in their work every day. What does it mean to love in these instances? How do we minister in these contexts? The answer goes beyond an application of listening skills, spiritual and religious interventions to a fabric of meaning and a way of being with another. It is not that these questions are unique to situations of trauma in pastoral work, simply that trauma highlights most clearly what the questions are and what spiritual resources we draw on. Over the days and months of 9/11 chaplaincy that followed, I realized that the pastoral model that I had reflected upon for a number of years, was in fact my strongest resource in the face of such trauma. It was a model of the Trinity.

The main role of the group of chaplains at Ground Zero was a ministry of not only presence but prayer, as the Temporary Mortuary chaplains' prime task was not simply to be there for those involved in recovery but to be there to bless the bodies and body parts of the 19,916 human remains that were recovered on the site. This is what can be described as 'the horror' of Ground Zero – the recovery of approx. 7 body parts for each person 'lost', in the context of ministering to first responders recovering parts of people they may well have known.

Much of the time the chaplain on duty would be walking the perimeter of the site or sitting in the covered trailer of the Temporary Mortuary. If "the remains" were that of a member of service - a firefighter, a police officer, FBI agent, Emergency Medical service technician or paramedic, the chaplain would be taken to 'the Pile' or later, down in 'the Pit' to bless the body, or part thereof, which had been recovered - then the whole recovery crew would stop and participate in this ritual. Then the body or body part would be taken to the Temporary Mortuary trailer and a preliminary examination would be made by a Medical Examiner, and it would be prayed over again. The body or part thereof would then be transferred to an ambulance, escorted by an honor guard if a member-of-service, and taken to the Medical Examiners morgue.

Over the nine months that the recovery site at Ground Zero was open, over 60 clergy worked as chaplains at the T-Mort. This represents approximately 6% of the 962 chaplains who volunteered for the American Red Cross in some aspect of the Disaster Response. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the T.Mort. chaplains worked over both 2001 and 2002, many taking at least one shift a week for the entire 9 months that the Ground Zero site was open. Of these almost half came from the five boroughs of New York City, overall 35% lived in Manhattan. All of these persons would have been affected in some way by the disaster of Sept. 11th and the ongoing mentality of living in a city still under the threat of terrorism (including the chemical terrorism of anthrax) and a city and country engaged in public mourning.

How did the chaplains minister at Ground Zero, with the smell of death pungent in their nostrils, whilst fires continued to burn underground, as they were called onto 'the pile,' or later down into 'the pit' to bless a body or body part that may have belonged to the son, brother or 'brother in arms' of the person standing next to them, whilst 300 fire, police and construction workers stood silent, helmets off, waiting to hear their prayers ring out over the site? How does one minister in such a context when one is affected by the disaster? How does one minister to the traumatized when one may be

somewhat traumatized oneself? I was privileged enough in my doctoral research to receive questionnaires from over half the chaplains and interview a third of them to explore some answers to these questions.

The disaster of September 11 is an extreme example, but I think it simply highlights the challenge of pastoral ministry in relation to human suffering that hospital and prison chaplains, pastoral psychotherapists and social workers, lay ministers and parish pastors face every day. What does it mean to love in these instances of crisis? How do we minister in these contexts?

The answer goes beyond an application of listening skills, spiritual and religious interventions to a fabric of meaning and a way of being with another. It is not that these questions are unique to situations of disaster or even trauma in pastoral work, they simply highlight most clearly what the questions are and what spiritual resources we draw on. Over the days and months of 9/11 chaplaincy I undertook, I realized that the pastoral model that I had reflected upon for a number of years, was in fact my strongest resource in the face of such trauma. It was a model of the Trinity.

Setting the scene

A lot of our liturgy comes from a Trinitarian perspective, and yet most of our pastoral care is grounded in an Incarnational perspective. This is for very good reasons, we have been told to “love one another, as I have loved you,” “to love as we have been loved,” our model for pastor, is generally that of the ‘Good Shepherd,’ and it is Jesus who shared our humanity, even whilst sharing in the Divine Life. Yet if we believe the Incarnate One, was indeed the Second Person of the Trinity, then both from the perspective of theological anthropology and Christology, we are drawn beyond the human life of Christ, into the Divine Life, of the God who is ‘Love’ and who is also, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to use terms of the immanent Trinity, and is for us Creator, Redeemer and sustainer, to use the most commonly used terms for the economic Trinity.

Augustine of Hippo, that great 4th century theologian of the Trinity suggests that if the love of God is not simply something that God does, but who God is, then the human ability to love may say something about the nature of God in us. He writes,

[John,] in the following verses after speaking of the love of God, not that by which we love Him, but that ‘by which he first loved us, and sent his son as a propitiation for our sins’; and, hence, exhorts us to love one another, so that God might abide in us, then, because he had said in unmistakable terms that God is love, he wanted to speak more plainly on this subject at once: ‘In this,’ he said, ‘we know that we *abide* in him and he is us, because he has given us of his Spirit.’ Therefore the Holy Spirit, of whom he has given us, causes us to remain in God, and God in us. But love does this. He is, therefore, the God who is love.¹

¹ Augustine, *On The Trinity*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 202. Italics mine.

However, this abiding of God in us is reflective of the unity of God, God as love, rather than a Trinitarian expression of God's comm-unity, although theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann argue that only the Trinitarian nature of God can philosophically justify the God whom we see on the Cross that loves, suffers and can change.² It is of note however that Augustine, in his reflections upon the Trinity, seeks to retain the love of God as reflective of God's unity but through it to see the tri-unity of God shining through, particularly in the *hypostasis* (person) of the Holy Spirit. He says,

“One may object: “I see love and I conceive it in my mind as best I can, and I believe the Scripture when it says: ‘God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God,’ but when I see it I do not see the Trinity in it.” But as a matter of fact you do see the Trinity if you see love.”³

Although he is most confident of appropriating love to the third ‘person’ of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, rather than the Father or the Son, at other times he sees love as the property of God in unity. Further Augustine argues that the image of God in the human person is an image of the Trinity. Augustine comes to a triune image in the human person that answers for him the question of [“how can we love God?”] which has been widely critiqued as being too self-contained, yet he highlights for us, both the relationality of the image of God and the triune structure of that image.

So, if we are made in the image of God, that image can be seen to be a Triune image; If ‘the spirit of your love’ is poured out upon us, then in Trinitarian thought, that Spirit mutually indwells all the ‘persons’ of the Trinity, and therefore in its outpouring indwells us; If the **image** is one that is “renewed” as Augustine would say, then this must not simply be seen ecclesiastically or eschatologically, simply located in the work of the Church, or in the life to come, but has to be interpreted in relation to all humanity, and in our example as applying also not only to the Christian chaplains that worked at Ground Zero, but to the Interfaith, Jewish and even Muslim chaplain that responded out of love and care.

Critiques have been made of the Trinitarian language in terms of gender, power and structure – descriptions seen as ratifying a patriarchal and hierarchical view of relationality, or appearing either as modalistic or tritheistic. Recently, there have been a number of alternatives offered such as Catherine Keller's multiple descriptions - The Deep, the Difference and the Spirit, Womb, Word and Wind, Tiamat, Sophia, Shekhinah; Tehom, Elohim, Ruach. Sally McFague's counterpoint to the immanent trinity in her suggestion of ‘Mother, Lover, and Friend’⁴ – a description that affirms a non-patriarchal relationality without, however, a sense of unity tying the relations together, or a real connection to salvation history. In comparison, David Cunningham

² Moltmann J., *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, SCM Press, Bristol, 1974. See Section 9 in Chapter 6 on The Experience of Human Life in the *Pathos* of God. (a) The *apatheia* of God and the freedom of man, (b) The *pathos* of God and the *sympatheia* of man, and (c) The fullness of life in the Trinitarian history of God. p.267-278.

³ Augustine, *op. cit.*, p.19.

⁴ McFague S., *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1987, p.183?

offers the substitute which picks up beautifully the sense of unity and difference in the Trinity through the analogy of water, 'Source, Wellspring, and Living Water,'⁵ but fails to indicate a sense of personhood that is relational in anything but process. The description of the economic Trinity that I have found most potent comes from liturgy rather than theology, and as an Anglican, we are after people of the book, this is perhaps not surprising.

In A New Zealand Prayer Book – *He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa* – to use both English and Maori titles, there is a rewrite of the Lord's Prayer, by the English Priest Jim Cotter, who describes God as Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver. If we share in some sense the image of God, but acknowledge also that we are not God, then I believe that through the Spirit, it is the image of the Economic Trinity can be experienced in human life, in this model through our actions of Earth-making, Pain-bearing, Life-giving. I also hope to briefly touch on how these Trinitarian movements or spaces of Earth-making, Pain-bearing Life-giving, are reflected in psychoanalytic Object Relations theory, as intrapsychic and interpersonal relational spaces of holding, suffering, transforming.

This can easily sound like a theology of works, and we don't know in pastoral care whether it is our own efforts or the Spirit of God in us, yet we know that the call to love God in the other, naked, hungry, imprisoned, sick an sinning, is that which all believers have been called to. It is my belief, however, that in pastoral care, when we act out of love in this Trinitarian way, we can move from a place of trauma to a place of transformation, that enables wholeness and healing both for ourselves as caregivers and for those we work with. We can see a glimpse of this transformation in one of the chaplain's reflections about blessing bodies at the Temporary

It was, it was a, a profound, just profound honor. I mean whether it was a bone from someone's finger, I mean, it ran from that extreme to, to whole bodies to members of service. It was, it was why in a way I was ordained. Why, you know, I went into the ministry. It was to be engaged in the work of bringing the holy into human life on a regular basis. And so whether it was the ministry of presence of just standing with, you know, standing as, as the workers were working or, or leading the precession out from the site and then up to the, up to the morgue and then the final honor guard as the, you know, the motorcycles assembled and everybody left the morgue in the convoy. It was to, it was to represent that God had not abandoned humanity. No matter how bad it looked, **God had not abandoned us.** That we didn't have any answers for why. That God was still with us.

⁵ Cunningham D., *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*, Basil Blackwell, Malden MA, 1998, p.72.

I remember when I would, when the M[edical] E[xaminer] would be done and would say "Okay chaplain." It was, it changed the room, almost always, and the familiarity for those who worked there all the time with "yeah, another body part." The fact that you stopped and prayed and did that kind of thing made it a whole new experience. Not a 'whole new experience,' made it, made it a *real*, made it, you know, - **this** is another **human being**. And the theological connection for me that was most profound was that I actually understood, in a practical sense, **what God's love** for every human being meant in application.

So let us look at how these movements of Earth-making, Pain-bearing, Life-giving might be seen to function in pastoral care through the experience of the T.Mort. Chaplains.

Earth-making

Earth-making on a pastoral level is about creating space in relationship. Theologically we can see it 'grounded,' to use an earthy term, in the relationship between the God who creates us, as that which is other than Godself, yet the God which breathes life into this dusty earth-creature, its about our physicality and our personhood. It is about relationship with the God that recreates the relationship in the context of sin and brokenness, and it is about the eschatological hope for all creation's redemption through we live in a now and not yet space of being. One of the chaplains at Ground Zero said when asked what it was like to bless the bodies and body parts

Well, I guess, those things do not bother me at all, and I guess all of us are sensitive to smell, but again, you get used to that very, very quickly. And it's also true that's why I guess David thought I should come. I have a background of twenty five years as an army chaplain. So I've seen men burnt up in just bad things like you saw there. And so it was not something that would cause me any revulsion at all. Because I saw that within that every part, whether it be a body part or a whole body, **you really have the fullness of God's creation in any one part**. The cell structure and the wonder of that wholeness and to remind the people there that our wholeness will, on this Earth, will only be kept in the mind of God. Because eventually, eventually we will all be dust or parts or particles. And so I think theological awareness always made me stand with a sense of awe and mystery and wonder of God's creativity and God's promise and capacity for restoration.⁶

Holding

In psychoanalytic thought creation is grounded not in the eternal of the relationship with the creating God, but creation in terms of the coming to be as human in the primary relationship with our mother, or other caregiver, who initially holds us, handles us, and reflects back to us the developing self that we are.

⁶ Interview DR787653377, 2006.

One of the great theorists from the Object Relations field in psychoanalytic thought, Donald Winnicott describes this holding relationship and the formation of empathy in relationship as being dependent on the good-enough caring of those that care for us. It is almost like saying that we love as we have been loved.

This sense of holding, like the theological reflections of creation is both physical and psychological. It is a relationship that helps us form a True Self in relation to the world rather than one that is simply compliant with the expectations laid on it. In pastoral care that requires an empathic way of being as primary, we can also see that our being with others needs to be like Winnicott describes the child's caregiver, holding the relationship, attuned to the emotional life of the other, and willing to bear the destructive elements without retaliation. We can see a reflection of this in one of the chaplains accounts,

The phrase that was being used for a while was comfort in the midst of chaos. That that was the gift that the Church brought was [in] that chaos. There's no, I mean, there's some big plan that the construction people have on this whole recovery effort, but to the naked eye, and it's not going to be obvious. But then in the midst - the moment the planes hit and the people coming out on September 11th on the way through - I really think it was comfort. Hope maybe came from that eventually, but I would say comfort was huge, because we were so violated. And like I said before, our joy was taken from us. There had to be comfort. Which I think is such a... it comes from us so early on when our parents comfort us. How a kid can pretty much hold it together until he sees his mom and then, you know, the skinned knee and everything brings out the tears and all that. That I saw that when you get the comfort from your mother. She didn't heal it, she just makes you feel better about it. And that's what the presence of ministry here was. ⁷

For Winnicott, creating this relational space is both about space holding and space affording. In pastoral care sometimes all one needs is for another to hold their story, to hear and receive that which they have been holding, without wanting to change it, transform it or fix it. Like this primary relationship it calls us to an understanding of care that is as much about being as doing, and as helpful as attending, listening and reflecting skills are in our pastoral conversations, creating space, holding the other's story is about a profound and humbling engagement with another at a deep level. Let's see how this is reflected in another chaplain's experience.

I was one day in the pit and I was watching one of these really big construction guys handling one of the really big cranes. You had to look up to see the top of the tire, much less where he was. And every time they would whistle for a break, he would climb down from his cab and walk around the other side of the machine away from all of us and then, it think it was a fifteen or twenty minute break and it whistled again and he would walk back, climb up and go to work.

⁷ Interview DR787997435, 2006.

So one day I decided to find out what he was doing. I climbed up on the rig when he climbed down and walked around. He was sitting on the far side of the rig looking down on the ground and sobbing. This huge guy. So I sat down next to him and he saw me and I kind of patted him on the shoulder and I just sat there with him and he cried and mumbled and talked to himself and cried for a while. And I just sat there keeping him company. And the whistle blew and he blew his nose and he got up and he looked down and said thanks and he went up and...

The next time I was there, and I saw him and he comes over to me and he says, "Chaplain, I can't thank you for everything you said. I feel so much better." I hadn't said one word. I just sat there with him. He says, "I can't thank you enough for everything you said." He said, "it really helped me."⁸

This encounter reflects so well the power of pastoral presence with a deeply empathic connection and the care, respect and willingness to seek out the other shown in the creation narratives, where God seeks us out in our brokenness. In one way the chaplain created a space that the contractor felt contained what he needed to hear, in another way, the chaplain courageously and respectfully entered the space of the other.

You can infer from this chaplain's account that holding relationships in pastoral care, creating such space both inside and between us as persons can be a deeply painful thing. If empathy is one of our ways of being pastorally, it means that we **feel** with the other and when you are feeling with suffering people, you suffer yourself.

Pain-bearing

For me pain-bearing is both anthropologically and theologically grounded in the tension between the best and worst of humanity. As animals, we have evolved on a social, technological and neurological level, far beyond other mammalian life. Animals are not generally capable of the sort of altruism that humanity is, to go beyond the affiliations of familial group, society and procreative drives to care for the other. However, nor are animals capable of the radical destructiveness that is shown in both individual violence and genocidal destruction wrought by humans that is not determined by physical defense, protection or sustenance.

Theological anthropology will not let us view the recourse to violence and destruction in humanity simply as signs of illness or aberration, but encourages an engagement in the pastoral field that recognizes human responsibility, grounded in a moral and ethical worldview that equates harm to others under theological categories of sin and redemption. However, in a Trinitarian theology this consciousness of sin and redemption and the contradiction in humanity that we can both love and hate in a way that no 'other' can, has to be seen in the light of the Triune God who created us, redeems us, and calls us to new life. For theologian Jürgen Moltmann, to explore who this God is, we must begin not with the history of humanity in creation, but the history of God at the point it intersects the history of humanity at the point of its greatest contradiction, at the Cross, the place where God suffers. He says,

⁸ Interview DR787776674, 2006.

God is unconditional love, because he takes on himself grief at the contradiction in men and does not angrily suppress this contradiction. God allows himself to be forced out. God suffers, God allows himself to be crucified and is crucified, and in this consummates his unconditional love that is so full of hope. But that means that in the cross he becomes himself in the condition of this love. The loving Father has a parallel in the loving Son and in the spirit creates similar patterns of love in man in revolt. The fact of this love can be contradicted. It can be crucified, but in crucifixion it finds fulfillment and becomes love of the enemy. **Thus its suffering proves to be stronger than hate.**⁹

Moltmann notes that an understanding of God as one who can suffer in love and still retain God's freedom grew out of 'an understanding of the meaning of the suffering of love from the history of the passion of Israel and of Christ. Paradoxically, for the chaplains, it was both 'suffering,' in the history of humanity and the 'history of God' that made this a little more bearable. You can hear Moltmann's understanding reflected in one of the chaplains words,

Hmm. A quick answer's - God. God helped me, assisted me, still does. He's always there, the helper, the spirit. And **the fact that God had suffered in Christ helped too.** To know that God would endure suffering and even death and understood that to believe that God walks that walk with us. Going through terrible times like this. We're not comfortless, I mean there is comfort at least. And to read that, I will not leave you comfortless, you know, I will send the comforter to you. To read that in the Bible is one thing, and to pray about it and study about it but **to experience it** in this setting, to feel it, to feel the comfort. It's just brings it alive. Just... And when I, I'm kind of glad that the first I did was go to Saint Paul's Chapel rather than to go to T-Mort first. Because I felt that comfort there, that spirit and that enabled me to put that prayer together and do the job at the T-Mort.¹⁰

From this chaplain's focus on the suffering of God, to the following chaplain's focus on the suffering of the Jewish people in response to the same question, the answers show that a theology of suffering is one thing that can assist us in facing suffering. I would prefer, however, that it has to be a theology that is integrated with both the rest of one's theology and the reality of the world where we suffer. When asked what it was that enabled him to hold and contain the enormity of the experience of his chaplaincy at Ground Zero and cope with it on a day-to-day level, one Rabbi said:

⁹ Moltmann J., *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* SCM Press, Bristol, 1974, p.248-9. Bold type mine.

¹⁰ Interview DR787632379, 2006.

We live from the Jewish perspective since the destruction of the second temple and the exile of the Jewish people, from a Jewish perspective in which God's world presence is hidden. And that's part of **the sense of loss of the Divine presence which we suffer**. We may have shown, I may have shown a ministry of presence. Somehow from a Judean point of view, since the destruction of the second temple, the world has experienced **the ministry of Divine absence**. Not absence of not being there, the absence in terms of not being there actively. There's active listening and there's active absence. I'm there, but I'm hidden. A sense of hiddenness... and comes a part of our own theological perspective that hopefully a time will come when God's revelation will be much more pronounced and much more positive in terms of its impact.¹¹

Here, the God who hides Godself in relation to our suffering, can be seen in Moltmann's thought in God the Father who not only suffers the grief of the suffering of the Son, but abandons him to it, and the Son in a sense becomes godforsaken, and "the Father also forsakes himself."¹² Moltmann emphasizes this seemingly to hold together a Trinitarian theology that is not simply a sophisticated form of monotheism, but in doing so he risks reflecting a distorted theodicy which theologian Dorothee Soelle names as "Theological Sadism which encourages a Christian masochism, which "correlates with an understanding of suffering as a process within the Trinity, whereby "one of the persons of the Trinity" underwent suffering which another person of the Trinity was the very one who caused it."¹³ This highlights the complexities and challenges a Trinitarian theology, which can split up the Trinity in such a way as to make it sound tri-theistic rather than triune. Soelle goes on to say,

When you look at human suffering concretely you destroy all innocence, all neutrality, every attempt to say, "It wasn't I; there was nothing I could do; I didn't know." In the face of suffering you are either with the victim or the executioner – there is no other option. Therefore that explanation of suffering that looks away from the victim and identifies itself with a righteousness that is supposed to stand behind the suffering has already taken a step in the direction of theological sadism, which wants to understand God as the torturer.¹⁴

A theology of the Trinity has to take into account suffering but cannot do so by splitting off the sufferer and the cause of the suffering, nor, as Soelle would do, ally oneself only with the victim of suffering, but see in the suffering of Christ, the God who is willing to suffer our worst to show us that God does not require suffering of us, but will be with us even as we cause each other to suffer, and in us as we stand alongside others in their suffering.

In the following narrative you can see that pain-bearing *is* painful. It entails something beyond the earth-making/holding of the previous section. Working with the

¹¹ Interview DR787537626, 2006.

¹² Moltmann J., *op.cit.*, p.243.

¹³ Soelle D., *Suffering*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1975, p.26-7.

¹⁴ Soelle D., *ibid.*, p.32.

pain of others means we open ourselves to our own suffering. This may be because of empathically sharing, or bearing, others' pain, or it may be that it opens us up that which has been or continues to be painful in our own lives. Yet it is often the case that in pastoral care, be it at a disaster site, or in the daily sufferings of what the world and we inflict on each other as humans, that we are called to suffer, to bear the pain of others and in that bear our own.

I think it was Ladder [number x] and I happened to be in the morgue on day, there were some days when there were a lot of remains uncovered, a lot. And [this] Ladder [company] had a large contingent in the pit that night. And they just happened to find a lot of their guys, they'd been coming in all afternoon. And I was down there a lot and out a lot and down and back and down and back and down and back, you know. And, and, it's one of those things because usually, there might even, during that point, there might have even been a specific person identified. I can't, I can't really remember... And I think when [this Ladder company] was there and there would be just processions going on and multiple remains being brought up and bag after bag after bag just being uncovered, checked out by the ME, cover up again, tagged, stuck in the corner ready to go in the ambulance up to Bellevue.

And there was this guy there that I got talking to, His name was [we'll call him, Jim], he was one of the drivers, fire fighter. And he was standing there, he and his guys, I, I talked to him for awhile on and off. I think I first met him down in the actual site itself and then I met him up there and we were talking and all that. And he got together with some of his guys talking and just to see those guys, their reaction. And this is like months later. This was probably, I think this one was after Christmas, this was in January or February, it was a winter month. There was just something about it that was so tragic. I, I, I don't know whether it was getting to me for the first time or what, I don't know. But it, there was, I was overwhelmed with the tragedy of it. Not by the dead but because of the living. The dead, they're taken care of, they're done, you know. But the people that they leave behind. And these guys were just kind of, they were kind of, they didn't know what to say to one another almost, you know. It's just the way they were standing, you know?

And finally they brought one of the big trucks up to escort the ambulance up, because the ambulance was filled with remains. And [*the firefighter I had been talking to*] drove and as he went by, I was just standing, you know, I, I, I helped escort the remains into the ambulance. And when he went back and got in the truck and he drove, there was this little... as he went by he just gave me this little up hand wave out the window. And that, like, killed me. It just freaking killed me at the time. I didn't know what to do. And fifteen minutes later, I was off shift and I walked up to the end of Liberty and I just went totally to pieces. I mean, I just, I did, I was just like completely out of nowhere. I just went completely to pieces and I just hugged [*my wife whom I was meeting*] and hugged her, it was insane. ¹⁵

Suffering

The psychoanalytic thought of Winnicott sees our concern in response to suffering as a development from our primitive understanding of our own destructiveness and the fact that we can hurt even those we love. Important psychologically is the opportunity to contribute, to make reparation or repair in some sense the damage, whether done by us or psychologically identified with through our connection to humanity as a whole.

Research done on Post-traumatic stress disorder indicates that proximity to a disaster, severity of the destruction and the morbid nature of material understandably increases the risk of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.

Interestingly enough, however, research done on the chaplaincy response after 9/11, indicated that those clergy who worked for the Red Cross alone, showed lower levels of PTSD than those who had not the opportunity to respond. Those clergy that were not able to contribute through participating in chaplaincy, despite the potentially traumatizing elements of the work, were perhaps left in a more difficult space.

You can see how this urge to respond, in relation to what could feel like overwhelming affect, functioned in one chaplain's narrative.

Well the first time I went down to the, the first time I went down when I came back up I just, and I walked into St. Paul's, I just broke down. And I, I don't think I've stopped being sad. I mean that's later, that's now. Go back to then... I think I felt sad whenever I thought about it. It was sad to me and **I think the sadness and grief drove me to do something because I couldn't live with just not doing something.** So I kept coming, I brought parish groups down to volunteer at St. Paul's, that kind of thing. You know the sadness of others affected me. I'd talk to people who'd lost somebody. I don't know, it was like walk... It was like scuba diving in a lake of sadness. Am I the scuba diver? You know it's like just swimming in a lake of it I would say.¹⁶

One can see from this example, that even if we own it as part of our role to bear pain in pastoral care, we can't get stuck in it - that, like Good Friday, or those long Holy

¹⁵ Interview DR787847347, 2006.

¹⁶ Interview DR787627663, 2006.

Saturday experiences, can't be the end of the story. We need to attend to our own selves through, I believe, good pastoral supervision, collegial relationships, spiritual direction, therapy and self care that attends to our bodies as well as our souls.

Incidentally, what caused the most suffering for the chaplains was their feeling of disconnection, isolation, or even direct lack of support from their churches for their ministry at Ground Zero. In Object Relations analytic thought this is called "Failure of the Good Object." We expect terrorists to commit terrorism, we expect "bad organizations" to do bad things, but in a state of crisis we often don't expect those good things we identify with, to let us down. Some of the chaplains were enormously supported by their local congregations and given time off to do ministry at Ground Zero, some secular employers gave their workers a day a week on full pay and saw it as their contribution to 9/11 but many chaplains experienced their churches as seeing it "as their thing," and not the Church's thing and many found themselves very angry at what they felt was an artificial split in ministry inside the church and from the church to the world. It was in this community at Ground Zero that many of the chaplains experienced what felt like true community, the kind of community we preach about on Sunday or try to live out in our daily lives.

Life-giving

What was life-giving at Ground Zero is those moments and relationships that we all need in pastoral ministry, whether as clergy or laity. That sense of community with one another and that sense of communion with God whose presence we seek to make present in our presence. The community at Ground Zero had multiple cultures, each with its own politics and the tensions between them, but it had a sense of mission that held people together for the most part and invited the chaplains into collegial relationship with firefighters, police, EMTs and construction workers that was transformative. You get something of a glimpse of the lighter moments in this chaplains account.

What I enjoyed was the sense of community. You know we were like a cloistered world that if you weren't a part of it, you don't know what it is. And it was, and it was a world you couldn't really talk about too much with other people. And, because immediately people went from the direction of it being just sad and yes, it was. But there was another piece to it of just, you know, in the midst of that sadness, we had to make ourselves alive.

But, you know just things like going off to the bathroom, the porta-sans, and you know, people telling me, "Don't forget to smile, Father, for [the] people taking your picture coming out of the porta-sans, across the street. You know there was that.

You know, I have memories of driving around in the Gator and we'd all be singing songs. And you had to do this, otherwise I don't think we could have done what we did. I remember in particular, there was a song for Lotto back then, I can't think of it right now. But I remember there were three of us in the Gator and as we were driving, we all were like moving our heads back and forth at the same time as we were singing. And you know, nobody out there would know what we're doing and even the movement of our heads wasn't looking so much like dance movements, but it was just kind of, we're all going back and forth at the points at the time we're supposed to tilt our heads. You know, great lunches with people. And you just felt very alive...¹⁷

This sense of being alive in the midst of destruction, is an Easter Sunday image. It is not about, everything is alright now, it is about finding that which keeps us alive and connected with one another, even in the midst of all that we face, be it disaster, trauma, or finding that which enlivens what can feel like dead parts of our ministry and ourselves.

As much as anything, however, what was lifegiving for the chaplains was, unlike the Rabbi's reflection on the absence of God, was the presence of God that was there for the chaplains even in what they were doing. You can hear this vividly in this vignette from one of the chaplains.

There wasn't an anxiety and then there was an anxiety all at the same time. It was one of the elevator shaft incidents where we were called in and it was great they found at least five bodies at one time so. And all these things of course happened in the middle of the night. They kept finding more in the middle of the night, I don't know why. I'm standing at the top of this hole with one of the other [chaplains], and we were watching them down there, they wanted us onsite, and there was always controversy whether they wanted us onsite or not. FDNY wanted us there, so we were there.

And then they called down from the hole, which is got to be at least 12 to 15 feet down, they said, "No, they want you down here." And I went, "down where?" And the hole was not big, it was like twice the size of this table. And I said, well how do I get down there? And they said, we'll carry you. And it was like a mesh pit, they just put us over their heads and lowered us into this hole. And my anxiety didn't come from the fear of being in the hole, it came from, "Oh God, please don't let me fall apart. Let me be strong for these men who obviously looking to us to be a presence of God down there."

¹⁷ Interview DR787789666, 2006.

And I went into like the deepest prayer that I ever had in my entire life of “God, please help me through this.” And somehow, on the way down, a calm came over me and **I felt more filled with presence of God than I ever had**, where I just knew it was okay and that I just had to move over a bit and let God help me do this. And after that I never felt alone down there. ¹⁸

Transforming

In Winnicott’s psychoanalytic thought, survival beyond destruction even in the midst of destructive elements is that what occasions love. We can see in the mother’s who love us even when we are aggressive and frustrating, in relationship with the partner’s who is with us for better or for worse, the church that sees even in our sinful and broken humanity the redeemed child of God, the Ground Zero community which taught the chaplains that even in the face of the worst of what we do to one another, we can transform it through our own response and the love of God.

This ability in pastoral care, not simply to stay with the devastation but to look for a response within and beyond it, I think can be seen in this simple but profound example of one of the chaplains who refused to treat the workers like victims but enabled them to go beyond that in their vulnerability.

...going into the site and working with guys to pray with them to bless their machinery because they knew they weren’t just picking up debris, they were picking up people and that was really hard. Especially when they said that, you know, that they would pick up a grappler full of debris and that they couldn’t always see clearly the truck they were putting it in and sometimes they would miss and how awful they felt like they had twice abused this person that was probably in there and stuff like that.

Initially, kind of a thing that ended up being, I don’t know, not a hallmark, but a routine for me was, I realized that the guys have a lot of time on their hands, they can’t listen to I-pods or anything or whatever or they can’t listen to their Diskman because they have to be able to hear. But it just seemed like they had too much mental time that they wanted to be prayed for, they wanted all this. You know, they were very good about expressing their needs, but I was feeling a little bit inadequate like, you know, I can walk down here to this terrible place, but then I leave and they’re stuck there.

¹⁸ Interview DR787766476, 2006.

So it ended up being... I had these three by five cards that I don't even remember why they gave them to us initially, but I started putting prayer requests on the cards for them to pray for. I said, you know, because they kept on mentioning, you know, "All I think about is this, this and this." So I gave, I said, "Would you pray for a friend of mine whose son needs a liver transplant and is dying. Could you pray for them?" And it just so happened that they were fluorescent colors, so they were very bright in this place. And through subsequent nights I would run into these guys again. And one guy was really, it was just like one of those great moments where he said, he goes, "This was really tricky," he said, "it was the first time I have not sat and thought about what's happening here but there's other people that are still going to work in the morning and still fighting with their spouse and so I appreciated being able to pray for somebody." And that was one of those God moments where I was just thankful that God inspired me to give guys a three by five card with somebody's name on it.¹⁹

The transforming space can be as simple as a 3 by 5 card, as profound as the Cross formed by the destruction of Ground Zero and as powerful as the community which enables the holiness of God to be present.

In all these movements or spaces: Earth-making, Pain-bearing, Life-giving, Holding/Suffering/Transforming, we can see that we can embody the love of the Triune God as God inspires us in what we do. The model I offer today, is essentially a simple model. Our pastoral task is to create space for the other to be who they really are, to bear the pain of their suffering, and to discover that which is life-giving in the midst of it all, to hold, to suffer, to transform. To do this we need to pay attention to all that in ourselves, to love as we have been loved, that we may abide in God and God in us, God with us, that we may be with others, in God's name in this suffering and broken world. This is the pastoral task to which we have been called, as big and as small as that.

And so I want to thank you for your time and attention. You may disagree with my pastoral theology, and would certainly see other things in the experience of the chaplains at the Temporary Morgue, but I hope that if you have not come to a place where your pastoral theology connects with your systematic theology which connects with your experience with others, then I hope this might simply inspire you to a place of further reflection that may be fruitful for you.

I want to finish with some words of one of the chaplains about the hope of such ministry in which you can see all the Triune movements in pastoral care.

¹⁹ Interview DR787997435, 2006.

But I prayed for the people, I thanked God for His creation, this human being and for all the people who knew and loved this person, may finding these remains bring closure and peace to them knowing that now they can bury, even if it's a small portion. That they would be able to take this, their loved one and now give them respect and final burial, whatever their tradition would be. And then thanking God for the eyes of the people, the construction workers who found them, and all that. And so when I would pray and bless and all this. It was of course, centered on the fact that another person had been found, but it was also on the living. And that was one of the thing that.

And one of the fire fighters remarked at one time, he said, "Not that it's bad, but," he said, "you tend to smile when you pray." And I said "Because I hope, I have hope, I have hope out of all that has happened that's evil, that good is being brought out, that people will have remains, that, you know, you've been blessed by being part of that. So I said, it was kind of a hope filled ministry, because if you focused only on the death and the destruction and the horrible smells and that, it would always be overwhelming. Being in a community, being a part of something that was bringing about good was very important."²⁰

Thank you .

²⁰ Interview DR787997435, 2006.