

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Knowing Jesus Is Experiencing God** Days of Christmas Tuesday after Epiphany,  
January 7, 2014 8:15 AM **1 Jn 4:7-10**; Mk 6:34-44 (St. Raymond of Penyafort,  
priest) (“God is love” is a revelation.)

Today’s reading from the First Epistle of John is extremely rich and provocative. Too often I think it is taken as poetry. It isn’t mere poetry; it may be poetic, but it’s profound truth. It’s not just a way of talking; it’s a revelation when he says, “God is love.” This is not something we could reason to. This is not something that is the common property of all religions. All religions talk about some kind of god or deity, but never have they come up with the idea “**God is love**”—never! It isn’t a reasonable proposition. **It’s a revealed truth.** And John asks how do we know this? **We know it because God sent his only begotten Son into the flesh.** And through the flesh we can now see and touch this love of God; we can sense it; we can experience it. **That’s how he is describing his life with Jesus.**

We can use these words and try to fill them out in our own mind and imagination. **What did this beloved disciple actually experience in Jesus to inspire him to write this? What must Jesus have been like to convince him, not only that he is divine, but that divinity itself consisted in love?** When we say “God,” we mean that which must be, cannot not be. That means love must be, cannot not be. That means everything that exists comes from love.

This is not the experience the vast majority of people have, mind you. They do not experience this. That is why the Son of God coming into the world in Jesus is such a momentous event, because **the world needs to know what God is like.** It is never going to figure it out on its own—never, never has, never will. The dirty little secret is people aren’t that smart. The most intelligent aren’t that smart. This goes way beyond intelligence. And **the way God communicates with us in Christ is personally, humanly.**

This does not mean this is the only way **God communicates**, no, indeed. **God has tried many ways.** And yet, even two thousand years after Christ we could say so many people still do not receive this revelation. On the one hand, this is wonderful news; on the other hand, this is very sad how little it has been celebrated.