

Reading for Easter Vigil 2007

By Karl Oles

Adapted from R. F. Capon, *The Third Peacock* (1971)

En arche epoiesen ho theos ton ouranon kai ten gen. . . .

Genesis 1:1

Let me tell you why God made the world.

One afternoon, before anything was made, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were sitting around in Flo Anna's Restaurant drinking coffee and sharing a Greek salad, and discussing one of the Father's fixations. From all eternity, it seems he had had this *thing* about being. He would keep thinking up all kinds of unnecessary things – new ways of being and new kinds of beings to be. And as they talked, God the Son suddenly said, "Really, this is absolutely great stuff. Why don't I go out and mix us up a batch?" And God the Holy Spirit said, "Terrific, I'll help you."

So they got to work, and when evening came the Son and the Holy Spirit put on this tremendous show of *being* for the Father. It was full of water and light and frogs; pine cones kept dropping all over the place, crazy fish swam around in the water glasses and neutrinos shot right through everything. There were volcanoes and violets, salmon and stars – and men and women everywhere to wonder at them, to taste them, to juggle them, and to love them.

And God the Father looked at the whole wild party and he said, “Wonderful! Just what I had in mind! Good! Good! Good!” And all God the Son and God the Holy Spirit could think of to say was the same thing, “Good! Good! Good!” So they shouted together, “Very good!” and they laughed for ages and ages, saying things like how great it was for beings to be, and how clever of the Father to think of the idea, and how kind of the Son to go to all that trouble putting it together, and how considerate of the Spirit to spend so much time directing and choreographing. And they told old jokes and drank their coffee, and they all threw olives and feta cheese at each other in ages of ages. Amen.

This is, I grant you, a crass analogy; but crass analogies are the safest. Everybody knows that God is not three men throwing feta cheese at each other. Not everybody knows equally clearly that God is not a remote and punishing judge, or a bright light that appears only to people having near death experiences. Accordingly, I give you the central truth that creation is the result of a Trinitarian bash, and leave the details of the analogy to sort themselves out as best they can.

We need one slight refinement, however.

It is very easy, when talking about creation, to think of God's part in it as simply getting the ball rolling – as if he were a kind of divine pinball player, after which the Laws of Nature took over and excused him from further involvement. But that won't work. This world is *fundamentally* unnecessary. Nothing *has to* be. It needs a creator, not only for its beginning, but for every moment of its existence. Accordingly, the Trinitarian bash doesn't really come *before* creation; what actually happens is that all of creation, from start to finish, occurs within the bash. The divine party is simultaneous with the universe.

Which is where the refinement in the analogy comes in. What happens is not that the Trinity manufactures the first duck and then the ducks take over the duck business for themselves. Every duck, down at the roots of its being, is a response to the creative act of God. In terms of the analogy, it means that God the Father *thinks up* duck #47307 for the north end of Lake Washington in the month of April 2007, that God the Spirit rushes over to the edge of the formless void and, with unutterable groanings, *broods* duck #47307, and that over his brooding, God the Son, the eternal Word, triumphantly *shouts*, "Duck #47307!" And presto! You have a duck. Not one, you will note, tossed off in response to some mindless duck quota. The world is not God's surplus inventory of artifacts; it is a whole barreland of the apples of his eye, constantly juggled, relished, and exchanged by the persons of the Trinity like a baseball flying around the bases in a perfect double play of delight. And that, incidentally, is why baseball proves we are made in the image of God.