



The Romances of Saint John of the Cross

1. Romance on the Gospel text “In principio erat Verbum,” regarding the Blessed Trinity.



*In the beginning the Word
was; he lived in God
and possessed in him
his infinite happiness.
That same Word was God,
who is the Beginning;
he was in the beginning
and had no beginning.
He was himself the Beginning
and therefore had no beginning.
The Word is called Son;
he was born of the Beginning
who had always conceived him,
and was always conceiving him,
giving of his substance always,
yet always possessing it.*

*And thus the glory of the Son
was the Father's glory,
and the Father possessed
all his glory in the Son.*

*As the lover in the beloved
each lived in the other,
and the Love that unites them
is one with them,
their equal, excellent as
the One and the Other:
Three Persons, and one Beloved
among all three.
One love in them all
makes of them one Lover,
and the Lover is the Beloved
in whom each one lives.
For the being that the three possess
each of them possesses,
and each of them loves
him who bears this being*

*Each one is this being,
which alone unites them,
binding them deeply,
one beyond words.
Thus it is a boundless
Love that unites them,
for the three have one love
which is their essence;
and the more love is one
the more it is love.*

2. On the communication among the Three Persons.

*In that immense love
proceeding from the two
the Father spoke words
of great affection to the Son,
words of such profound delight
that no one understood them;
they were meant for the Son,
and he alone rejoiced in them.
What he heard was this:
“My Son, only your company contents me,
and when something pleases me
I love that thing in you;
whoever resembles you most
satisfies me most,
and whoever is like you in nothing
will find nothing in me.
I am pleased with you alone,
O life of my life!
You are the light of my light,
you are my wisdom,
the image of my substance
in whom I am well pleased.
My Son, I will give myself
to him who loves you
and I will love him
with the same love I have for you,
because he has loved
you whom I love so.”*

3. On creation.

*“My Son, I wish to give you
a bride who will love you.
Because of you she will deserve
to share our company,
and eat at our table,
the same bread I eat,
that she may know the good
I have in such a Son;
and rejoice with me
in your grace and fullness.”*



*“I am very grateful,”
the Son answered;
“I will show my brightness
to the bride you give me,
so that by it she may see
how great my Father is,
and how I have received
my being from your being.
I will hold her in my arms
and she will burn with your love,
and with eternal delight
she will exalt your goodness.”*

4. Continues

*“Let it be done, then,” said the Father,
for your love has deserved it.*

*And by these words
the world was created,
a palace for the bride
made with great wisdom
and divided into rooms,
one above, the other below.
The lower was furnished
with infinite variety,
while the higher was made beautiful
with marvelous jewels,
that the bride might know
the Bridegroom she had.
The orders of angels
were placed in the higher,
but humanity was given
the lower place,
for it was, in its being,
a lesser thing.*

*And though beings and places
were divided in this way,
yet all form one,
who is called the bride;
for love of the same Bridegroom
made one bride of them.*

*Those higher ones possessed
the Bridegroom in gladness;
the lower in hope, founded
on the faith that he infused in them,
telling them that one day
he would exalt them,
and that he would lift them
up from their lowness
so that no one
could mock it any more;
for he would make himself
wholly like them,
and he would come to them
and dwell with them;
and God would be man
and man would be God,
and he would walk with them
and eat and drink with them;
and he himself would be
with them continually
until the consummation
of this world,
when, joined, they would rejoice
in eternal song;
for he was the **Head**
of this bride of his
to whom all the members
of the just would be joined,
who form the body of the bride.*

*He would take her
tenderly in his arms
and there give her his love;
and when they were thus one,
he would lift her to the Father
where God's very joy
would be her joy.*

*For as the Father and the Son
and he who proceeds from them
live in one another,
so it would be with the bride;
for, taken wholly into God,
she will live the life of God.*



5. *Continues*

*By this bright hope
which came to them from above,
their wearying labors were lightened;
but the drawn-out waiting
and their growing desire
to rejoice with their Bridegroom
wore on them continually.*

*So, with prayers
and sighs and suffering,
with tears and moanings
they asked night and day
that now he would determine
to grant them his company.*

*Some said: "If only
this joy would come in my time!"
Others: "Come, Lord,
send him whom you will send!"
And others: "Oh, if only these heavens
would break, and with my own eyes
I could see him descending;
then I would stop my crying out."*

*“Oh, clouds, rain down from your height,
earth needs you,
and let the earth open,
which has borne us thorns;
let it bring forth that flower
that would be its flowering.”*
*Others said: “What gladness
for him who is living then,
who will be able to see God
with his own eyes,
and touch him with his hand
and walk with him
and enjoy the mysteries
which he will then ordain.”*



6. Continues

*In these and other prayers
a long time had passed;
but in the later years
their fervor swelled and grew
when the aged Simeon
burned with longing,
and begged God that he
might see this day.*

*And so the Holy Spirit
answering the good old man
gave him his word
that he would not see death
until he saw Life
descending from the heights,
until he took God himself
into his own hands
and holding him in his arms,
pressed him to himself.*



7. The Incarnation

*Now that the time had come
when it would be good
to ransom the bride
serving under the hard yoke
of that law
which Moses had given her,
the Father, with tender love,
spoke in this way:
“Now you see, Son, that your bride
was made in your image,
and so far as she is like you
she will suit you well;
yet she is different, in her flesh,
which your simple being does not have.
In perfect love
this law holds:
that the lover become
like the one he loves;
for the greater their likeness
the greater their delight.
Surely your bride’s delight
would greatly increase
were she to see you like her,
in her own flesh.”*

*“My will is yours,”
the Son replied,
“and my glory is
that your will be mine.
This is fitting, Father,
what you, the Most High, say;
for in this way
your goodness will be more evident,
your great power will be seen
and your justice and wisdom.*

*I will go and tell the world,
spreading the word
of your beauty and sweetness
and of your sovereignty.
I will go seek my bride
and take upon myself
her weariness and labors
in which she suffers so;
and that she may have life,
I will die for her,
and lifting her out of that deep,
I will restore her to you.”*

8. *Continues*

*Then he called
the archangel Gabriel
and sent him to
the virgin Mary,
at whose consent
the mystery was wrought,
in whom the Trinity
clothed the Word with flesh.
and though Three work this,
it is wrought in the One;
and the Word lived incarnate
in the womb of Mary.
And he who had only a Father
now had a Mother too,
but she was not like others
who conceive by man.
From her own flesh
he received his flesh,
so he is called
Son of God and of man.*

9. The Birth

*When the time had come
for him to be born,
he went forth like the bridegroom
from his bridal chamber,
embracing his bride,
holding her in his arms,
whom the gracious Mother
laid in a manger
among some animals
that were there at that time.*

*Men sang songs
and angels melodies
celebrating the marriage
of Two such as these.
But God there in the manger
cried and moaned;
and these tears were jewels
the bride brought to the wedding.*

*The Mother gazed in sheer wonder
on such an exchange:
in God, man's weeping,
and in man, gladness,
to the one and the other
things usually so strange.*





CARMELITE
MONASTERY of BALTIMORE

Discover the Fire of God's Love

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