

02. Jesus: Priest, Prophet and King



I. Jesus, our One and Only Priest

In the Christian Church there is only one priest, Jesus, 'the one mediator between God and humankind' (1 Timothy 2:5).

Our priesthood is a special sharing in the priesthood of Christ.

As we reflect on Jesus as King, Prophet and Priest, an argument can be made that it is the aspect of Priesthood that offer the most fruitful perspective on the way in which Jesus can be said to be King and Prophet

Jesus as King

Jesus' kingship was that of a humble servant: 'You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet' (John 1:13-14).

Jesus' kingship was that of the Good Shepherd 'who lays down his life for his sheep' (John 10:11).

Jesus as King

He was a 'king' by giving himself throughout his ministry, culminating in his gift of himself in love on the cross.

Giving oneself is essentially a priestly act.

Jesus as Prophet

Jesus not only spoke God's word. He is God's Word-made-flesh. His mission was to 'testify to the truth' (John 18:37): the truth that God is love. Jesus testified to this by 'bringing Good News to the poor', by 'proclaiming liberty to captives' and 'new sight to the blind', by 'setting the downtrodden free' (Luke 4:18 = Isaiah 61:1-2).

Jesus as Prophet

Jesus 'spoke with authority': 'What I say is what I have seen in the Father's presence' (John 8:38).

As with his way of being King, so with his way of being Prophet, the key is found in his offering of himself to his Father and to us.

He was a Prophet by giving himself throughout his ministry, culminating in the gift of himself on the cross.

Giving himself is essentially a priestly act.

Jesus as Priest

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews recognised that in his person and in his ministry, culminating in his self-giving on the cross, Jesus brought to perfection the priestly ministry.

‘Jesus had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people’ (Hebrews 2:17).

Hebrews 1:1-3

‘By various stages and in various ways in times of old
GOD speaking to the Fathers in the prophets
with the end of those days spoke to us in a SON,
whom he established heir of all
through whom also he made the ages
who, being the shining-forth of his glory
and the expression of his reality,
and continuing to carry all things to their goal
with his utterance of power involving himself
in effecting purification from sins,
took his seat to the right of the Majesty on high.’

The priestly ministry of the King

Psalm 110 recognises the priestly role of the king by speaking of him as 'a priest according to the order of Melchizedek' (Psalm 110:4), the priest-king of Jerusalem (Genesis 14:18).

Jesus perfects the ministry of the priest-king

The king was God's especially anointed one, mediating God's word to the people by governing according to God's law and binding the people together as God's covenant people.

Jesus' mission was to bring about the reign of God.

The priestly ministry of the Levitical priest

‘The priests officiate in the sanctuary and approach Yahweh to serve him’ (Ezekiel 45:4).

‘The Lord set aside the tribe of Levi ... to stand in the presence of Yahweh, to do him service, and in his name to pronounce blessing’ (Deuteronomy 10:8).

‘Moses consecrated Aaron ... to bless his people in the name of the Lord ... to offer sacrifice to the Lord ... to make atonement for the people. He entrusted him with his commandments, committed to him the statutes of the law, to teach Jacob his decrees and enlighten Israel on his law’ (Sirach 45:18-21).

PRIEST

SANCTUARY

Presence to God

**Action
towards
US**

**Action
towards
GOD**

WORD

MEDIATION

**SACRI
FICE**

God's Way

US

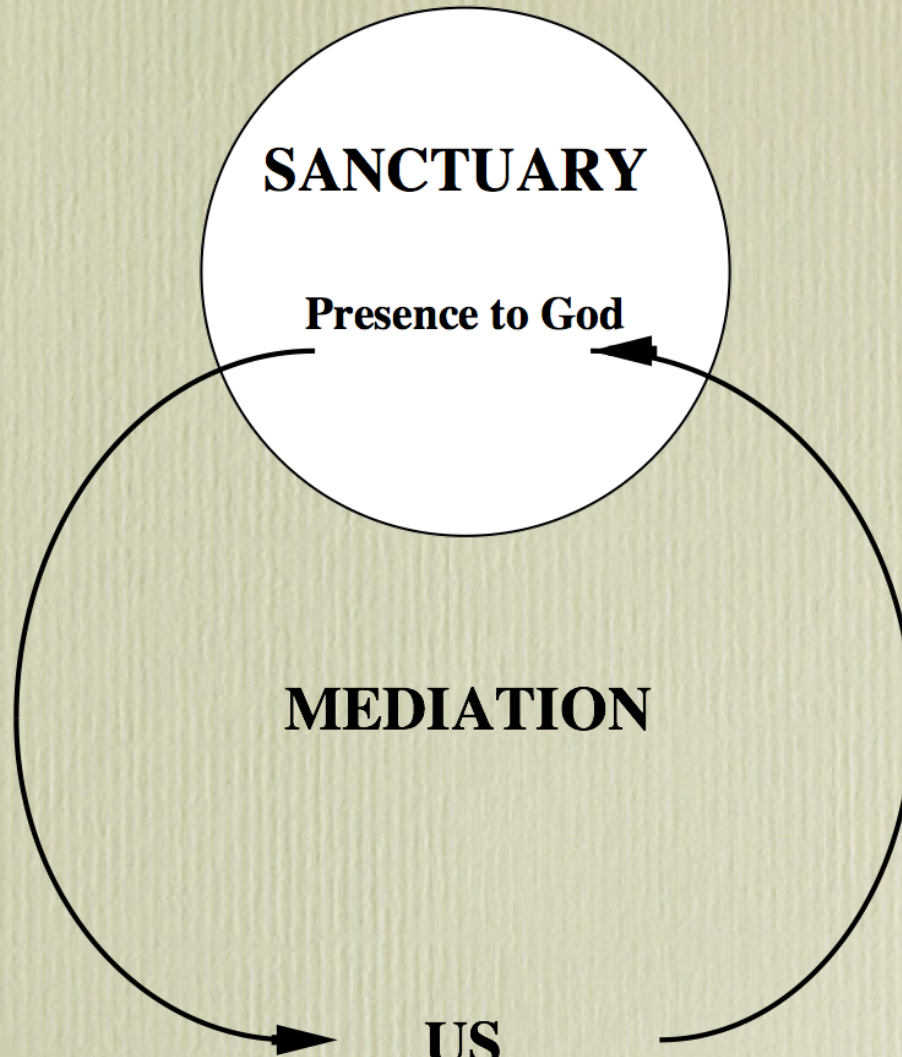
Self-offering

Will

Prayer

Blessing

forgiveness



The priestly ministry of the High Priest

The high priest carried out his special function on the feast of Yom Kippur (the 'day of the cover'). He took the sins of the people into the inner sanctuary of the temple to the 'cover'(the 'mercy-seat'), God's throne.

This is the meaning of to 'expiate' or 'atone': bringing sin into contact with divine mercy annihilates sin, for nothing impure can survive in God's presence.

Jesus perfects the ministry of the high priest

‘He is the expiation-sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours but the whole world’s’ (1 John 2:2; also 4:10).

‘All are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation-sacrifice by his blood, to be received by faith’ (Romans 3:24-25)

2. Everyone in whom Jesus lives shares in Jesus' kingly, prophetic and priestly ministry

Jesus said: 'I am the vine, you are the branches' (John 15:5).

His life, the life of the vine, is the Spirit of love that binds him in intimate communion with God, his Father.

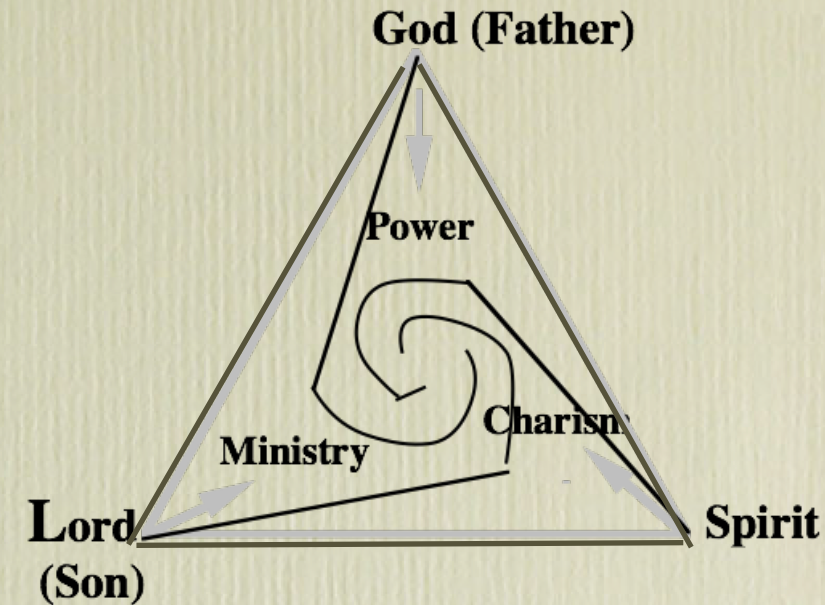
The branches share this Spirit and so share in Jesus' communion of love.

Paul can say: 'It is Christ who lives in me' (Galatians 2:19).

Disciples share in Jesus' life according to the special grace each is offered, and according to the way in which each responds to this grace. The Church is the Body of Christ carrying out his mission in the world with all the creative power of God, through his Spirit poured out into the community.

Various priestly ministries of the faithful

1Corinthians 12:4-7



‘There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord; there are varieties of ways of exercising power, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’

The church is a priestly community.

We are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Peter 2:9).

'Jesus made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and

I. The Baptised share in the life and ministry of Christ the King

Each member of the Church, through Baptism, is consecrated to share in the life and ministry of Jesus, the king, for each of us is to be an instrument of Jesus' Spirit to bring about the reign of God in the world.

2. The Baptised share in the life and ministry of Christ the Prophet

Each member of the Church, through Baptism, is consecrated to share in the life and ministry of Jesus the Prophet, for each of us is to be an instrument of Jesus' Spirit to reveal God to the world by 'speaking and doing the truth in love' (Ephesians 4:15).

3. The Baptised share in the Life and Ministry of Christ the Priest

As for Jesus, so for each member of the Church, the key consecration is that of sharing the life and ministry of Jesus the Priest.

Through Baptism we share in Jesus' own communion with his Father, and each of us in our own unique way is graced to be an instrument of Jesus' Spirit in bringing others into this divine communion.

As with Jesus, so with us, the key to this sharing is a consecration of mind, heart, soul and body.

Philippians 2:1-5

‘If then there is any appeal in Christ,
any consolation from love,
any communion in the Spirit,
any movements of compassion and feelings of love,
make my joy complete:
be of the same mind, having the same love,
being of one soul and of one mind.

Philippians 2:3-5

‘Do nothing from selfish ambition.

Do not strive after or seek to find your value
in things that are worthless,

but in humility regard others above yourselves,
so that not everyone is focused on themselves,
but each is looking to the interests of others.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.’

Philippians 2:6-9

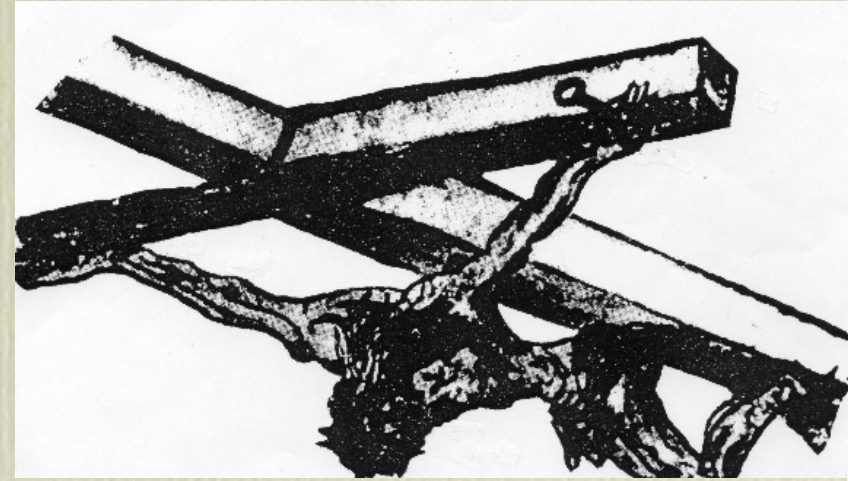
‘Whoever has seen me
has seen the Father.’
(John 14:8-9)

‘Being in the form of God,

Jesus did not regard equality with God
as something to be grasped,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God highly exalted him.’



The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church LG§I

‘The Church, in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament – a sign and instrument of communion with God and unity among all people.’

God mediates his love to the world through those who share in Jesus’ life. Each disciple shares in his or her own way in the priestly mediation of Jesus. We are not mediators independent of Jesus. We are not separate vines. It is Jesus who mediates through us, as the vine bears fruit through its branches.

The church, and each member of the church, shares in the one priesthood of Christ, and so in his consecration and in his mission. Each Christian is consecrated to Christ in a special communion, and so has a priestly ministry which graces him or her to mediate to others the grace of Christ.

There are as many different ways of carrying out Christ's priestly mediation as there are disciples of Jesus in the Christian community. The essence of this ministry is the same as it was for Jesus. We are priests through the gift of ourselves to God and to others in obedience and love.

From her communion in the life of God, a wife mediates God's love and God's word to her husband and children, and by welcoming their loving response she helps draw them into the communion of love which is Jesus' life. Likewise a husband for his wife and family. One can think of teachers, nurses, politicians and public servants. One can think of all the many simple ways in which we are a sacrament to each other of God's love. Jesus is carrying on his priestly mediation through and in us, sanctifying the world through the holy lives that we live, lives that he makes possible by sharing his Spirit with us.

This is the context in which we are to find the special way of exercising baptismal priesthood that is lived by the ordained.



I am the Vine

Words and Music: John Michael Talbot

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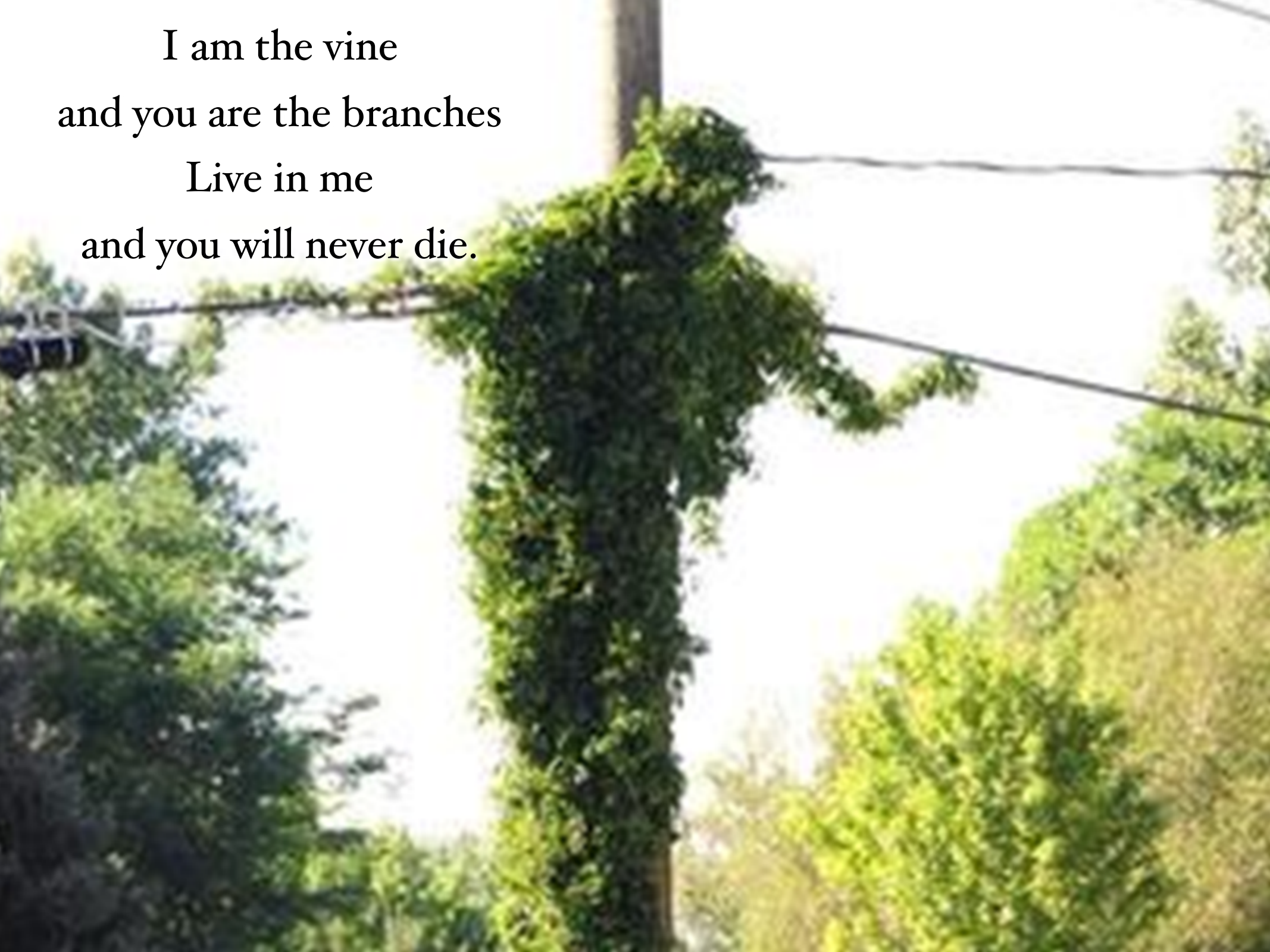
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I am the Vine

I am the vine
and you are the branches
Live in me
and you will never die.





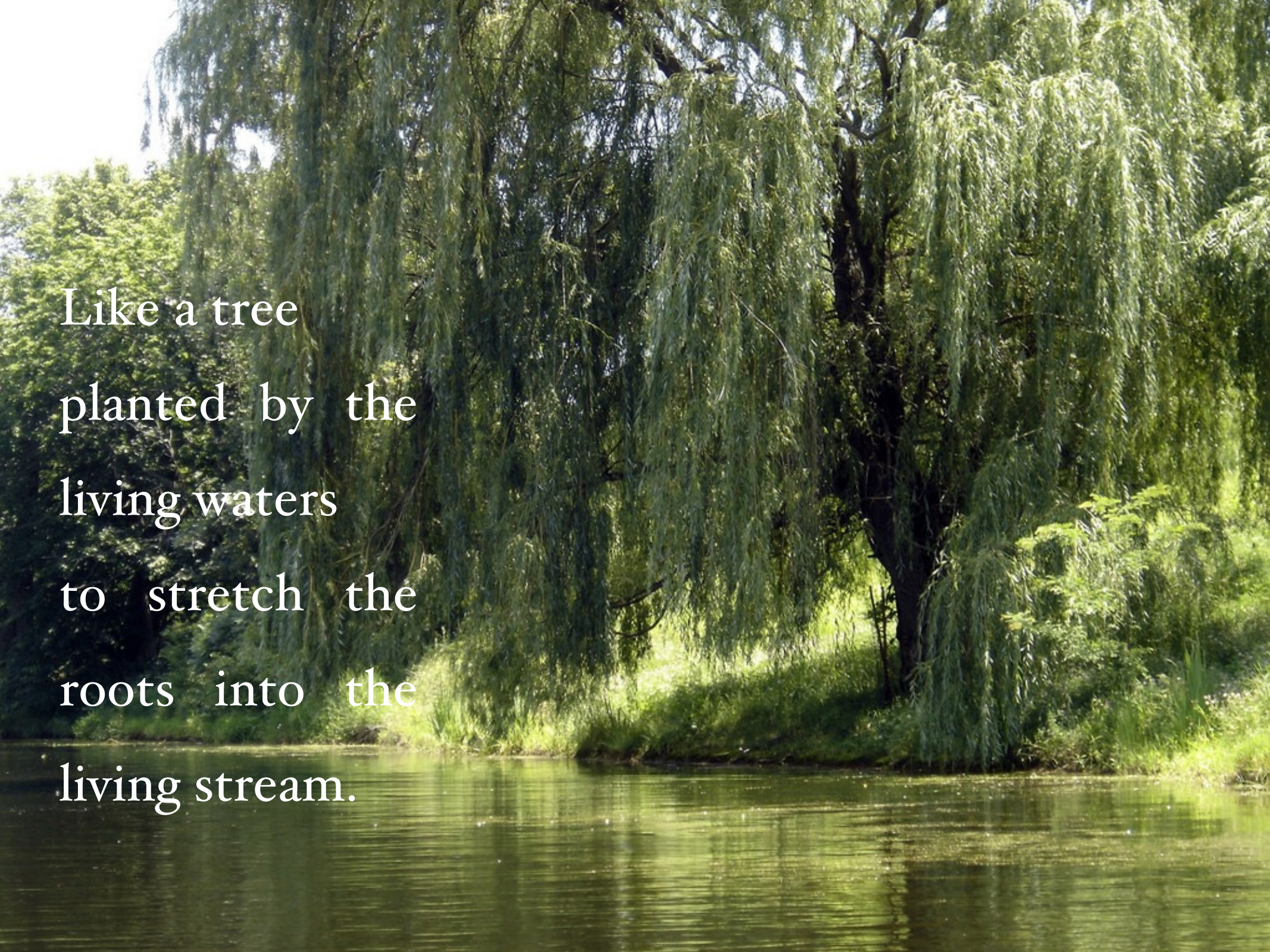
I am the
vine
and
My Father
is the
keeper.



Come to me.

Let the Spirit

bring you life.

A large, mature weeping willow tree stands on the bank of a calm body of water. Its long, slender branches hang down, some reaching the water's surface. The leaves are a vibrant green, and the water reflects the foliage. The background shows more dense greenery under a bright sky.

Like a tree
planted by the
living waters
to stretch the
roots into the
living stream.



You will show
no distress
in the heat of the
drought
but still bear fruit
and live



I am the vine and you are the branches
Live in me and you will never die.



I am
the vine
and
My Father
is the
keeper.




Come to me.
Let the Spirit
bring you life.





Come to me all you heavy laden
My yoke is easy, My burden light.



I will raise you up on the wings on an
eagle,
and to God's mountain will fly



I am the vine and you are the branches

Live in me and you will never die.



I am the
vine
and
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is the
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Come to me
Let the Spirit bring you life.