

## The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

This story is told of Saint Augustine of Hippo, a great philosopher and theologian. He was preoccupied with the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. He wanted so much to understand the doctrine of one God in three persons and to be able to explain it logically.

One day he was walking along the seashore reflecting on this matter. Suddenly, he saw a little child all alone on the shore. The child made a hole in the sand, ran to the sea with a little cup, filled her cup with sea water, and ran back to empty the cup into the hole. Back and forth she went to the sea, filling her cup and pouring it into the hole. Augustine said to her, "Little child, what are you doing?" She replied, "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole." "How do you think," Augustine asked, "that you can empty this immense sea into this tiny hole and with this tiny cup?" She answered, "And you, how do you suppose that with your small head you can comprehend the immensity of God?" With that, the child disappeared.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life, yet the word "Trinity" is not written in the Bible. The early church had its moments trying to make sense of all of this. In fact, it took two ecumenical councils and over three hundred years to give us the words of the Nicene Creed that we will profess here in a few minutes. Even today's readings do not directly explain the doctrine of the Trinity as we have come to know it.

The word Mystery as we use it in the church, is a truth which we are incapable of discovering apart from Divine Revelation, and even when revealed, it remains "hidden by the veil of faith and enveloped by a kind of darkness." In other words, our understanding of it remains only partial, even after we have accepted it as part of the Divine message.

God choose to reveal this greatest of mysteries through the Church over a period of time. This gives witness that God continues to guide His church by the power of the Holy Spirit through the centuries. I think it also demonstrates the role of the Church as the Herald of the truth of God.

If we are honest with ourselves, we may realize that much of what we understand about the Trinity, we learned as a child. I would guess that many of us learned that God the

Father is the Creator, God the Son is the Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. Of course, all of that is true, but there is more.

The "*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*" says this about the Trinity:

We do not speak of three gods in the Trinity, but of one God. Father, Son, and Spirit are not three modes of God, but three distinct Persons who are the same divine being. They are also in relation to each other, for all three Persons work together in the works of creation, redemption and sanctification.

It is not something that we think about every day, but it is good to know that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all participate in the creation of the world not just yesterday, but throughout all time. The same is true of our redemption and our sanctification. The Holy Trinity is not like McFarland Clinic where they have one doctor for the feet, and another for the heart, and yet another for head. When we pray to God the Father, we pray through the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in their mission of love to create, redeem, and sanctify us.

Some people think God the Father is the God of wrath and judgment. It is easy to see how they may have gotten that, when we read about all the violence in the pages of the Old Testament.

But, we have to know that this is a misunderstanding of the message of the Bible. Love is what God is, and if we cannot see the love of God in the words of the Bible, we have not understood the text correctly. Everything God does is for the benefit of those who love Him.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. (John 3:16)

These words reveal to us something of the nature of the unity within the Trinity. God loves us so much that He made our creation and our salvation the eternal mission of the Trinity.

He loves us so much that He will do anything to abide with us forever, even to the point of suffering and dying for us! The Triune God who is almighty and all knowing, is Love itself, and we are the object of His love.

Perfect love is a life giving love, and the love shared within the Trinity is shared with all of us as we are conceived in love. That is what God did when He chose to give us life by creating us in his image and likeness.

Since today is also Father's Day, I think it would be appropriate to reflect upon the amazing gift that we have been given both by our Heavenly Father, and our earthly father.

When love is shared between a husband and a wife, they are given the power to become co-creators with God as their partner... and a child is born. Husband and wife become father and mother. That is how God chooses to create us. Through love. A father's love. A mother's love. God's Love.

That is also how God chooses to save us....through love. No matter how many challenges we are given in this life, love will always see us through. God's Love. A perfect love from a perfect Father. Our love will be tested...and we will fail...but He will not fail. He is God...and He loves his sons and daughters perfectly. He will always be able to save us... no matter how often we fail. As the author of John tells us today, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him". (John 3:17)

As I said before, God made us in His image and likeness. When we became a father, we shared our life giving love, with our wife, and a child was born. God made us a trinity within His Trinity. How fantastic is that!

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. This verse tells us who God is in His unity, but it also causes us to ponder--who we are that we should be the object of that infinite love.

Psalm 8 poses the question: "When I see your heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and stars that you set in place—What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them little less than a god, crowned them with glory and honor". (Psalm 8 4-6)

The Mystery of the Trinity is not so much to be understood as to be lived. Jesus revealed the way, when He gave us the Great Commandment. "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22: 37,39)

If we abide in the Trinity, loving God and neighbor will become as easy as breathing. Living this life giving Mystery will teach us who we are and who God is. A life shared with God and neighbor will teach us that we are indeed sons and daughters of God, and that our destiny is life within the Trinity.

Many saints have been given to the Church, and they witness by their lives that it is really possible to live within the Trinity, even here on earth. In January 2007 many of us in our deacon formation class went on a pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi and Sienna. During that time, we visited the childhood home of Catherine of Sienna. I have felt a special connection to this great saint and doctor of the Church, ever since I listened to the story of her life, as I stood in the bedroom where she slept as a child. This magnificent prayer to the Trinity is used in the "Office of Readings" for the Memorial of Catherine of Sienna on April 29th.

"Eternal God, eternal Trinity, you have made the blood of Christ so precious through his sharing in your divine nature. You are a mystery as deep as the sea; the more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I search for you. But I can never be satisfied; what I receive will ever leave me desiring more. When you fill my soul I have an even greater hunger, and I grow more famished for your light. I desire above all to see you, the true light, as you really are.

"I have tasted and seen the depth of your mystery and the beauty of your creation with the light of my understanding. I have clothed myself with your likeness and have seen what I shall be. Eternal Father, you have given me a share in your power and the wisdom that Christ claims as his own, and your Holy Spirit has given me the desire to love you. You are my Creator, eternal Trinity, and I am your creature. You have made of me a new creation in the blood of your Son, and I know that you are moved with love at the beauty of your creation, for you have enlightened me."

For all of you out there, and especially our fathers and our spiritual fathers, live the mystery God has given you today, and Have a happy Father's Day.

Deacon Alan Christy

June 18-19 2011