

## **THE MOST HOLY TRINITY (YEAR A)**

*Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9*

*2 Corinthians 13:11-13*

*John 3:16-18*

“IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.  
AMEN.”

*At confirmation, the Archbishop asked the children for a definition of the Holy Trinity. A girl answered very softly - “The Holy Trinity is three persons in one God.” The Archbishop, who was rather old and almost deaf, replied - “I didn’t understand what you said.” And the young theologian standing in front of him replied: “Well, His Excellency, you are not supposed to. The Trinity is a mystery. Nobody understands it.”*

The Easter season is over with Pentecost, which we celebrated last Sunday. Today we are back again to the remaining long period of Ordinary Season, to begin it with the solemn celebration of the feast of “**The Most Holy Trinity.**” It is a doctrinal feast, that is, one not occasioned by any particular event in the life of the Savior. Rather, what is brought to mind here is the very Reality of God, the Divine Mystery. Actually, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is difficult to swallow. But we believe in this mystery because Jesus who is God taught it clearly, the Evangelists recorded it, the Fathers of the Church tried to explain it and the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople defined it as a dogma of Christian faith.

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is a basic doctrine of faith in Christianity, understandable not with our heads but with our hearts. It teaches us that there are three distinct Persons in one God, sharing the same Divine nature. Here, we are dealing not just with some terribly abstract theological doctrine, still less with a mathematical contradiction that  $1+1+1=1$ . What Scripture reveals to us is a unity of three real Persons. Of course, to try to understand fully how one God can be three Persons is not really possible for us.

However, while dealing with this, we have to avoid two extreme measures: 1st, breaking our heads trying to work out fully how one God can be three Persons, and 2nd, saying, ‘*Oh, it’s a mystery*’ and not bother to have any

understanding at all. On the one hand, we are constituted as human beings to want to understand, to find meaning in things, and we should always try to go as far as we can in making sense of our faith. On the other hand, there are many things in life which are and probably always will be far beyond our understanding. That does not mean we deny their truth or their existence. Even human life itself, even our own lives, our very identity as persons – body, mind & soul is something we never fully grasp. Instead, then, of trying to indulge in theological acrobatics or worrying about orthodox formulations, let us try to enter into a relationship with these three Persons, through whom God is revealed to us.

The basic doctrine of the Holy Trinity – viz. three persons in one God, equal in divinity, yet distinct in personality is not explicitly spelled out in the Bible. In fact, the very word '*Trinity*' is never found in the Bible. There are only vague and hidden references to the Trinity in the Old Testament. However, we do have some limited passages in the New Testament to support it. For example -

At the Annunciation, God the Father sends His angel to Mary, God the Holy Spirit overshadows her and God the Son becomes incarnate in her womb.

At the Baptism of Jesus, when the Son receives baptism from John the Baptist, the Father's voice is heard and the Holy Spirit appears as a dove.

At the Ascension, Jesus gives the missionary command to his disciples to baptize those who believe, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### THE REVELATION OF THE HOLY TRINITY:

The Gospel Reading of today from St. John is taken from the end of a long discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus about rebirth through water and the Spirit. The love of God, which resulted in the gift of Jesus Christ to the world, is depicted in all its generosity. Not to judge but to save, Jesus was given to the world. The expression '*given*' suggests not only his incarnation, but also his suffering and death on the cross. The response called for is faith in Jesus. As St. John illustrates throughout his account, the coming of Jesus into the world provokes a crisis in

human history. The encounter with Jesus results in a kind of self-judgment, wherein people by their acceptance or rejection of him decide their own fate. Here again we see *'The Revelation of the Holy Trinity'* within the drama of salvation, calling for a human response of faith that brings with it an abundance of new and eternal life.

Again, in the Second Reading from St. Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Corinthians we find the formulation of the Holy Trinity, in his greeting - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." This greeting we use in our day at the beginning of the Holy Mass.

The First Reading from the Book of Exodus is the story of the second giving of the law after the people of Israel broke the covenant by worshipping the golden calf. Moses is asked by God to bring a second set of blank stone tablets up the mountain, and this time to come alone. Here our passage begins, with God's appearance to Moses and a revelation of the divine name as - "merciful and gracious . . . slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity." This one is less ambiguous than the one given in the sight of the burning bush - "I am who I am." For the purposes of the Liturgy of Trinity Sunday, this revelation of God's name is central. Compassion is of God's essence. In this passage, we catch a glimpse of God in the loving act of offering a restored covenant relationship to a *'stiff-necked people.'*

### THREE DIFFERENT ROLES:

The Latin word *'persona'* really refers to the mask that actors used to wear to indicate the role or function they were playing. The mask then comes to mean role or function or job. What the Trinity then says is that God has three *'masks'* indicating three distinct roles or functions. God reaches us personally in three different ways. Although it took the Church a couple of centuries to express this in theological language, the three *'roles'* of God are clearly delineated in the Scriptures, both Hebrew and Christian. The three Readings today are clear testimony of this:

- 1) God the Father [creates](#) and provides for His creatures. This is beautifully expressed in the First Reading of today from the Book of Proverbs.
- 2) God the Son [redeems](#) us and reconciles us with God the Father. He builds a bridge between the human and divine. He is the pontifex, the bridge-maker. God's love becomes humanized and therefore tangible, understandable and able to be more easily followed and imitated.
- 3) God the Holy Spirit [sanctifies](#) us, strengthens us, comforts us, teaches us, forms us and guides us to God. We find God through His Spirit acting in and through us, in and through others, constantly creating and re-creating, making all things new.

So, the Most Holy Trinity is often seen and understood as God's three different functions; viz. - Father as the Creator, Son as the Redeemer and Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier. Inseparable in what they are, the Divine Persons are also inseparable in what they do. There is a beautiful prayer to the Most Holy Trinity quoted in a book on Celtic prayer, which expresses beautifully the different qualities of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, '*O Father who sought me, O Son who bought me, O Holy Spirit who taught me.*'

#### WHOLE PHYSICAL REALITY IS TRINITARIAN:

But now, when we gaze into the physical reality of the world, then we find that [all reality is essentially trinitarian](#). And it looks as if the whole physical reality is constituted in the image of the Most Holy Trinity. For example,

1. [Space](#) - Length, breadth & height
2. [Time](#) - Past, present & future
3. [Numbers](#) - Negative, zero & positive, ...and so on.

We remove one, either length or breadth or height, we cannot have a Space. Similarly, with Time & Numbers.

### THE FULLNESS OF LOVE:

Actually, the Most Holy Trinity is the reality of God Himself, manifested as Father, Son & Holy Spirit. We also know through the Scripture that God has manifested Himself to the world as **LOVE.** In the Second Reading of today, from the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us how God's love has been made known to us in the Person of the Son, Jesus Christ. We see God as Son in Jesus, the visible and human revelation and manifestation of God's love and compassion for the whole world. This love is climaxed in the extraordinary events of Jesus suffering, dying and rising to life. He says, **"The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."** That is what it is all about. So, God is the fullness of LOVE, which is in fact Trinitarian; i.e. it involves three things, and is expressed symbolically as Father, Son & Holy Spirit. That is to say -

**GOD = LOVE** → **Father** : The Lover

**Son** : The Loved One

**Holy Spirit** : The subsisting Love that is generated between the Father and the Son, which they send forth between them.

So, if there is a spirit that presides over the whole of this Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, it is the spirit of LOVE, for it is truly love that leads the Father to give to his Son all that he has, and similarly, it is love that leads the Son to give back to his Father what he had been given by him. This is why the Holy Spirit is nothing other than the Love of God personified.

### A SHARED COMMUNITY LIFE:

One final consideration: The Most Holy Trinity is a community of Persons, and God's own life is a shared life, a life of mutually interacting relationships. From this we can

consider that we are called to a shared living with the Three who are one God, with other people and with our whole created environment. We are called to find unity and harmony in the midst of ever-changing diversity.

Let us then turn to God in the community of his Persons, a community of perfect sharing and equality. We all are God's children and it is in his image that we have been created and it is to grow ever more into his image that we are called. It is a world of harmony, peace and joy. The feast of the Most Holy Trinity is the mystery of Divine Life, which reminds us that God is a community, a family of love and it is the model for both Christian life & Christian families. That is to say,

Christian life is trinitarian; i.e. WE – GOD – NEIGHBOR ← LOVE

Christian family is trinitarian; i.e. FATHER – MOTHER – CHILD ← LOVE

It is clear then that the Divine life of the Most Holy Trinity flows in each one of us and that it should be manifested in our Christian life & our Christian families. Its importance we can easily see for -

All prayers in the Church begin with the sign of the cross, i.e. taking the name of the Holy Trinity and they end glorifying the Holy Trinity.

All sacraments are administered (i.e. we are baptized, confirmed, anointed, our sins are forgiven and our marriage blessed) in the name of the Holy Trinity.

The blessings are always given in the name of the Holy Trinity.

### CONCLUSION:

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Today, when we celebrate the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, let us praise & glorify the Triune God and bring ourselves in the peace and joy of living in communion with the

Divine life of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit, which is actually the model of our Christian life & our Christian families.

Finally, today's feast can be a reminder to pray with much greater meaning and respect that most common of all prayers, so common we hardly think of it as a prayer - the Sign of the Cross - "IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN." It combines both the mystery of the Trinity and mystery of our salvation through Jesus' suffering, death and rising to life. It encapsulates in so few words and a simple movement of the arm all that we believe in and all that we live for. Let us, then resolve to make this sign with greater dignity and reverence and in a spirit of real prayer. And this is the Good News of today.

**FR. ALBERT LAKRA**

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