

CENTRAL IDEA: THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Reading 1 Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9

Early in the morning Moses went up Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him, taking along the two stone tablets. Having come down in a cloud, the LORD stood with Moses there and proclaimed his name, "LORD." Thus the LORD passed before him and cried out, "The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity." Moses at once bowed down to the ground in worship. Then he said, "If I find favor with you, O Lord, do come along in our company. This is indeed a stiff-necked people; yet pardon our wickedness and sins, and receive us as your own."

- Through Moses, the Chosen People are given a privileged understanding of God. God IS and God is GOOD. He is worthy of worship because he is LORD, that is, the Supreme Being, and because he is good, being "a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity."
- At the same time, God wants to be in a relationship with human beings, beginning with this Chosen People. Moses asks, "Do come along in our company," and God does.
- At the same time, human beings have a hard time going along with God. We are "stiff-necked" and in need of pardon for our sins.

Responsorial Psalm Dn 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56

R. Glory and praise for ever!

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers,
 praiseworthy and exalted above all forever;
 And blessed is your holy and glorious name,
 praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.

Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory,
 praiseworthy and glorious above all forever.

Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

Blessed are you who look into the depths
from your throne upon the cherubim,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

This is from the song of the three young men who were thrown into a furnace by order of the Babylonian king, whose lives were miraculously preserved.

In their joy they praised God for every good thing in creation.

God does not “need” this praise: In himself he is perfectly happy and glorious.

However, *we* need to offer this praise. God is worthy of our highest praise because of the benefits he bestows on his creation. He bestows these benefits, especially on us, creatures who can know God and who are saved by God, a God who not only *looks* down “into the depths” here, but who *has come down* “into the depths” to save this world out of love (Jn 3:16).

Reading 2 2 Cor 13:11-13

Brothers and sisters, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the holy ones greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

- To be a follower of Christ means to be happy to be in a privileged state of friendship with God. This is why we rejoice.
- To be a follower of Christ means to make an effort to live accordingly, to mend our ways.
- It also means to live in friendship with all other Christians (and as much as possible with every other person we encounter).

- Christian theology had not yet developed the explicit doctrine of the Trinity, but we see it implicitly in the formula Paul uses to say farewell to the Corinthians in this second letter: God (the Father), the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
- The “love of God” the Father flows to us through the “grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,” and the Holy Spirit draws Christians together in fellowship. This is why we can “encourage one another, agree with one another, [and] live in peace” with one another.

Gospel Jn 3:16-18

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

- God has an only Son. Therefore God is also Father.
- God the Father and God the Son are also good toward mankind.
- God gave his Son to humanity by coming into the world as a man. He also gave his son to suffer and die to save humanity.
- The Son said yes to becoming a man and to suffering to give men everlasting life.
- This world that God so loves is a serious place in which people are already condemned. People perish unless they are saved.
- If you know this but refuse it you are condemned.
- If you know this and accept it by believing “in the name of the only Son of God” you will be saved and have eternal life.
- It must be understood that believing is not just words but actions.
- Both the belief and actions are possible due to the free gift of graces received.
- They are the fruit of graces received.
- This Gospel passage says the same thing as the passage in which God reveals himself to Moses. God is good; he wants to be “in our company”; yet we are stiff-necked and need to be pardoned.

Doctrine: The Blessed Trinity

- The one God is three divine persons (CCC 261).
- We know this mystery hidden in God because he has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (CCC 261).
- The Father generates the Son, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.
- The truth of the Blessed Trinity sheds light on the truth that God is Love. The Blessed Trinity in itself forms a community of three bound together by mutual love.
- In creating the human family, God looked at his own inner life to find the design for it. God's inner life is a loving, life-giving community: the Father and Son love one another and from their love proceeds the Holy Spirit. The family is also a loving, life-giving community: From the mutual love of a husband and wife comes a child – with the help of God.
- The Trinitarian nature of God is hinted at in the Old Testament, for example in Genesis when God says, "Let *us* make man in *our* image" or in the passage from Proverbs about the Holy Spirit at play in the Creation. But it is explicitly revealed in the New Testament. For example at Christ's Baptism, when Christ comes out of the water, we hear the voice of the Father speaking, and the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove. Or when the resurrected Christ instructs the disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- God welcomes us into his Trinitarian life: Jesus Christ is the eternally begotten Son of God the Father. Through his Son, God the Father adopts us as spiritual sons and daughters. We are temples of the Holy Spirit.
- The "task" of the Holy Spirit in regard to us is that he sanctifies the Church and humanity.
- By "Baptism 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death in eternal light" (CCC 265).
- Does Christianity believe in three gods? No. We profess three persons. Christianity is not polytheistic, as Islam charges. We believe in the existence of only one God. Yet, we believe in the Trinity, who is one God in three divine Persons.

- Each of the persons of the Trinity is equally God. *Consubstantial* (“of the same substance”) is the technical word which we recite in the revised English translation of the Nicene Creed.
- Through sanctifying grace, which we receive at baptism, we actually share in the inner, Trinitarian life of God. If we attain salvation, we will directly participate in the Beatific Vision in heaven.
- These are some reasons the Blessed Trinity is not only the central truth of our Christian faith but also the central truth of our Christian life (CCC 261).

Practical Application: Living like the Blessed Trinity

- Because the Blessed Trinity is the central truth of our Christian life, it must be possible to live this truth. How can we be like the Blessed Trinity?
- One truth we can glean from the Dogma of the Blessed Trinity is that God is a social being: three Divine Persons in relationship with one another.
- We are also social beings. We are always in relationships with other persons: as a family member, as the member of a school community, as a friend, as a spouse or parent, as the member of any number of civic associations, as a citizen, as a member of the Church.
- In God, each of the three Persons is co-equal.
- However, in human relationships there is inequality. In some relations, we are dependent on the other, like a child is. In others, we and the other depend on each other, as in a friendship. In others still, the other is dependent on us, for example, when a teacher instructs a student.
- With Sacramental grace we can live all these human relationship as communions of love that reflect God’s inner life.
- The best idea of that inner life of God we have is from Christ. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God’s love and he has shown us that the essence of this love is the gift of self. How does this apply to us? A Vatican II document gives us the answer: “[M]an, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (GS 24).
- It is easy to see how sacrificial love applies when people depend on us. It may be hard to provide the sacrifice, yet when we do, we love like God loves.

- But what about when we are the dependent ones?
- Even when we depend on the other, we can still give of ourselves.
- Some examples are obeying the just authority of the one on whom we depend, as in obeying a doctor's orders;
- offering up the difficult situation, as in patiently waiting when we are hungry;
- being cooperative and cheerful when getting technical support over the phone; and so on.
- When we accept the consequences of being in a dependent position, we also have a chance to imitate Our Lord when he was a child, when he was in the wilderness for forty days, and when he was enduring his Passion.
- So whenever we give of ourselves to another person out of love, we are being like the Blessed Trinity.
- However, we also have the terrible freedom to be selfish. Every selfish act is not only the opposite of human love; it is also the opposite of the life of the Blessed Trinity. No one on earth likes to be around a purely selfish person. We can't stand people like that. (Even selfish people hate other selfish people.) This helps us see how such behavior could exclude one from the Beatific Vision.
- The Homiletic Directory recommends these Catechism points and themes for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity:
 - CCC 202, 232-260, 684, 732: the mystery of the Trinity
 - CCC 249, 813, 950, 1077-1109, 2845: the Trinity in the Church and her liturgy
 - CCC 2655, 2664-2672: the Trinity and prayer
 - CCC 2205: the family as an image of the Trinity

DOCTRINAL HOMILY OUTLINES

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