

Feast of the Holy Trinity: May 22, 2016

Proverbs 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Trinity which is a mystery difficult to comprehend. In our daily life we begin every one of our prayers, activities, programmes or works with the sign of the cross and call upon God, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Even though we remember the Trinity several times a day, it is difficult to comprehend the full meaning because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we invoke constitute a great Mystery. The Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity consists of this: the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but only one God with three attributes. We have Father who is the creator, Son, the redeemer and Holy Spirit the sanctifier and the counselor. This is the Mystery of the Trinity of Persons in the one God. If one were to seek for a comparison in order to try to grasp a little of this mystery, the only one that is completely adequate is that which Jesus himself gave us, when he said that just as the living Father has sent him, he is sending out his disciples. They have to go and baptize all in the name of the Trinity. He also tells us that he and the father are one and he will send the Spirit on the Apostles who will counsel and guide them in the mission.

The feast of the Trinity is a mystery. It is difficult for us to understand the three persons and yet say there is one God. Our faith tells us that these three persons are indeed distinct and yet together. And that God is closely associated with human kind that he sent his son and also he sent his own spirit. The first person is the Father and he is called Father because he is the source of life for the son. The second person is called the Son because he receives his life from the Father. Father and Son love each other with a love more complete and perfect than we can imagine. Their love is so perfect that it is a person, the Holy Spirit. The third person then is the personal love between Father and Son and is the bond of Union between the Father and the Son. Yet in our practice of faith there is no other words remembered than the names of Father Son and the Spirit. We do this in our sign of the Cross, make the sign of cross before we begin any work or conclude it; every one of prayers contain the name of the Trinity and this Trinity is needed for us to fully live our Christian life. In the doxology at the Eucharist we say, Through Him, with Him and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours Almighty Father.

Today's First Reading is taken from the Book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings and counsels. This Book reminds of the many facets of God. There is the creative action of God the Father, forming the world and all that the world contains. It portrays God not as an authoritarian remote figure but someone intimately accessible to the created world. The passage of today tells us of the wisdom personified which existed even before the creation. Wisdom is closely associated with God. Wisdom as a person cooperated with God intelligently in the work of creation and he was the architect and the designer. Thus expressing himself the best way that he could, the author was trying to assert the absolute priority of Wisdom and her origin from God before all creation. The author strived to assert that Wisdom was with God prior to the creation of the visible universe. By placing Wisdom first, before creation, this acknowledges the superiority of Wisdom over and above all created things. For God to create the order of all what is seen and unseen, He had to possess infinite Divine Wisdom, knowledge and understanding. For nothing can be created

prior to being known and understood. Wisdom witnesses all that God does to make creation fit for humanity.

In the Second Reading from the Letter to the Romans, Paul tells us how God's love has been made known to us in the Person of 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. St. Paul tells us that through sufferings, endurance, the forming of character and hope, God's love is poured into our hearts through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This love of God, it is not "our love of God" but rather, "God's love of us." In Jesus, the transcendent and unknowable God is presented to us in such a way that we can easily reach out to him. Jesus builds a bridge between the human and divine and in the plan of salvation, the Heavenly Father has appointed Christ as our Mediator. Therefore every reconciled Christian who will be saved will share with hope in the risen life of Christ. The first effect of justification is the Christian experience of peace. This is a peace that anxieties cannot upset, a hope that knows no disappointment, and a confidence of salvation of which the Christian can truly boast. All the gifts that we receive from God, be it His grace, faith, hope, peace, justification, they are bestowed upon us through the Blessed Trinity. It is by the grace of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in the Most Holy Name of Jesus that God manifests His love in us, with us and through us so His light may shine in the world. God's love for us gives us courage in all the difficulties of life.

The farewell discourse of Jesus is characterized by five Paraclete or advocate passages. Two important aspects of the Paraclete are emphasized in these passages: first the Holy Spirit as the continuing presence of Jesus in the post-resurrection community and second the Paraclete as a teacher and a witness. These passages have become very important in the church's subsequent theological development of the doctrine of the Trinity. John provides us with a rich understanding of the divine mutuality that existed between the Father and the Son. When those insights are combined with these Paraclete passages we have all the necessary ingredients for shaping the rich and essential doctrines of the Trinity. In today's passage Jesus expresses a sense of urgency. He has to communicate many things and it is not easy for them to understand fully the teaching. They are able to contain only a few things. The teachings of Jesus will be carried into the future in and through the presence of the Paraclete. A disciple can anticipate the future only in faith and not with foreknowledge. This does not mean that Jesus will leave them in isolation. Rather he will be with them in the Holy Spirit who will teach them and guide them.

Today's Gospel Reading from John reaffirms the three fold action of the Blessed Trinity in our lives. Both, the Father and the Son have sent the Holy Spirit into the world as the Spirit of truth to guide us in truth. As Jesus did not speak of His own accord, but spoke what He heard from the Father, so also the Holy Spirit will not speak on His own, but will speak of what He hears. We hear those words of Jesus from the Last Discourse, where he says: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." Already he had promised them the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to strengthen and console them and recall to their minds the truths he had taught them. In today's text he repeats the promise and tells them that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and that the truths he will reveal to them will be those which the Father and the Son want revealed. Here we learn that while "Revelation is already complete in Jesus Christ; it has not been made completely explicit and

will be revealed gradually to them as it is to the church. The Spirit will not only strengthen them in the days of his passion but continuing the work of Christ and by consolidating it, the Spirit will give glory to Jesus who turn gives glory to the Father.

The feast of the Holy Trinity reminds us that God is a family of love. We are dealing here not just with some terribly abstract theological doctrine, still less with a mathematical contradiction but that we proclaim our firm belief that in one God there are three Persons. 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. We need our faith and our trust in the word of God that this Trinitarian God is always in our life who guides us protects us and makes our being a reality. Therefore St Paul tells us that the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. The Paraclete will do in them two things: first he will guide the disciples to all truth and second, he will declare to the disciples the things that are to come. The Holy Spirit will not predict the future; but he will proclaim the teachings of Jesus in the new and changing circumstances in the lives of the disciples. Through the presence and teaching of the Holy Spirit, the teachings of Jesus will always be fresh and new to every generation of believers. This is how the Paraclete will glorify Jesus.

We see God as Father, the origin and creator of all life and dependent existence. This Person is the origin and goal, the Alpha and Omega, of all things, of all life. This Person is the source of all Truth and Love, a Person of Mercy and Compassion, the source of all Wisdom. And our hearts will find no rest until they rest in Him. In Jesus, the transcendent and unknowable God is presented in a form, which helps us to have some understanding of his real nature and to reach out to him. Finally, we see God as Spirit forming us, guiding us, teaching us, moving us, comforting and strengthening us. We find God through his Spirit acting in and through us, in and through others. Constantly creating and re-creating, making all things new. The Spirit is sometimes called the 'soul of the Church'. We must always keep in mind that 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 remember today that the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in him. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith". The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men "and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin". For us Christians this feast can be a reminder to pray with much greater meaning and respectfulness than most common of all prayers, so common we hardly think of it as a prayer - the Sign of the Cross. 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 resolve to make this sign with greater dignity and reverence and in a spirit of real prayer. Let us turn to God in the community of his Persons, a community of perfect sharing and equality. 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 mystery of the Trinity tells us that the Son is not the Father, and the Father is not the Son; and yet both are but a single God. When the Son receives everything from the Father, he becomes similar to the Father, sharing what is proper to his Father. Finally, 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. We see God as Father, the origin and creator of all life and dependent existence. This Person is the origin and goal, the Alpha and Omega, of all things, of all life. This Person is the source of all Truth and Love, a Person of Mercy and Compassion, the source of all Wisdom. In Jesus, the transcendent and unknowable God is presented in a form, which helps us to have some understanding of his real nature and to reach out to him. All human works of compassion, healing, reconciling, service, forgiveness and making amends reflect the work of redemption and reconciliation and are identified more closely with the Son. Finally, we see God as Spirit forming us, guiding us, teaching us, moving us, comforting and strengthening us. We find God through his Spirit acting in and through us, in and through others. If all men and women of the entire world obey the order of Christ given by the Church, then we shall all be able to contemplate one day the glory of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. May this be our most fervent desire on this day: to obey the Word of God by participating with faith and with love in today's Eucharist, just as the Most Blessed Virgin Mary always said "yes" to the Order of God, ever present in her.

St Augustine was walking by the seashore one day contemplating and trying to understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity when he saw a small boy running back and forth from the water to a spot on the seashore. The boy was using a sea shell to carry the water from the ocean and place it into a small hole in the sand. The Bishop of Hippo approached him and asked, "My boy, what are you doing?" "I am trying to bring all the sea into this hole," the boy replied with a sweet smile. "But that is impossible, my dear child, the hole cannot contain all that water" said Augustine. The boy paused in his work, stood up, looked into the eyes of the Saint, and replied, "It is no more impossible than what you are trying to do – comprehend the immensity of the mystery of the Holy Trinity with your small intelligence." The Saint was absorbed by such a keen response from that child, and turned his eyes from him for a short while. When he glanced down to ask him something else, the boy had vanished.

Fr Eugene Lobo S.J. Bangalore, India