

The Holy Trinity Sunday May 31, 2015

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40; Romans 8:14-17; Matthew 28:16-20

On the feast of the Most Holy Trinity the church invites us to reflect on the central and most unfathomable mystery of that faith, which she has been sent to announce and make present: the mystery of who God is. In our practice of Christian Life, the Trinity is remembered often in prayer and during the daily routine by every Christian. Each time we make the sign of the cross, as we did at the beginning of this celebration, we say: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Trinity is the mystery of God in himself – a God who is "one but not solitary" as a fourth-century Creed says. Through Christ and his Holy Spirit we have come to know that in God there are three Persons, each is totally God, and the sole distinction between them is their respective relationship. Even though we remember the Trinity several times a day, as we invoke its presence before we begin any activity, yet it is difficult to comprehend the full meaning because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we invoke constitute a great Mystery. Our God is a Trinity, a God of love and forgiveness. In the Gospel of today Jesus commissions his disciples to carry on his mission to all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and promises to be with them till the end times. In the first reading Moses urges the people to be attentive to God. In doing so, they will enjoy his countless Blessings. In the second reading Paul refers to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. By our union with Christ, we are taken up into the family of the Holy Trinity.

The readings of today do not give us a clear and elaborate presentation of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. The doctrine of three persons in one God, equal in divinity yet distinct in personality, is not explicitly spelt out in the Bible. In fact the very word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible. The teaching about the Trinity is one of the most fundamental doctrines in our Christian faith yet not explicitly found as such in the New Testament. We have only limited biblical passages to support that in the fullness of God, there are three distinct Persons with specific attributes. In the closing verses of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus told his disciples, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Paul in the Second Letter to the Corinthians exhorts the community to live in peace and invokes on them the blessings of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself in his teaching calls God Abba, Father and he teaches the disciples too to invoke him in the same way. Jesus also speaks of the Spirit as his advocate and his oneness with him. He speaks of the unity of love between the three persons and says that if they have seen him they have seen the Father too. It is his Spirit that will come and continue to teach them further. He tells them that through the Trinity they will experience the love and forgiveness.

In our understanding of the Trinity specific roles however are attributed to them, namely, Father as the Creator, Son as the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier. Jesus explicitly teaches us about his close union with the Father and the Spirit, which is a bond of love. John in his Gospel tells us that the Word, Jesus was present at creation. We see the Trinity at work at the incarnation when Gabriel announces that Mary is having favor with God and the Spirit will come and Jesus will dwell in her womb. In the Holy Eucharist is manifested the fullness of the Blessed Trinity. As the Father and the Holy Spirit remained in Jesus while he was on earth, the Father and the Holy Spirit dwell in Jesus in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist bodily. At the Holy Mass the priest begins the celebration of the sacrifice in the name of the Trinity concludes the Holy Mass with a solemn blessing, again in the name

of the Holy Trinity. In all of the Catholic liturgy, we find references to the presence of the Blessed Trinity, at Confirmations, during the administration of the Sacrament of Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, the Holy Orders and Matrimony, at funerals, at vigils, at the hours of adoration and at every liturgical celebration. The Holy Trinity is mentioned in both, the blessing of persons and of objects. In fact the Holy Trinity which is a mystery is part of our Christian life.

In the first reading of today we have the discourse of Moses to the people of Israel before they move over to the Promised Land. Moses tells the chosen people of the special privileges they had above other nations where a God himself has led them from slavery to freedom. Moses as the leader impresses on the people of Israel of the unique relationship they had with God. In all of history, no people have ever been privileged to have a God so close to them. Moses runs through all the high points of their experience with God: their becoming God's chosen people, and all the signs and wonders associated with their deliverance from Egypt. The point that Moses wants to make here is that God is clearly committed to caring for them in every way. Then the most fitting display of gratitude the people can show is a firm resolve to remain loyal to the terms of the covenant. The Lord god is their God alone. No other presumed divinity has ever done a thing for them. At Mount Sinai God provided them with detailed instructions to give them every advantage in remaining God's faithful people. Fidelity to God is the one thing that will assure prosperity and long life for them in the Promised Land. As the Lord of the Universe God has every right to demand obedience from them. If they only obey his commands God will reward them and their posterity forever.

In the second reading of today Paul reminds the people of the Father's love, the grace that comes through Jesus Christ and the fellowship or the unifying power of the Holy Spirit. We are all led by the Spirit and therefore we are the children of God. It is the Spirit which enables us to cry out with spiritual longing, Abba, Father, and the Holy Spirit does this because we have been made the children of God by the incarnation of Jesus the Son of God. Because we are adopted into God's household, heaven is our inheritance provided we obey Christ's commands. The point is that we can have the utmost trust in God. Anyone who is moved by the Spirit of God and anyone who has received the Spirit in Baptism have now new life in him. He has been made the son of God. It is the Spirit that unites all people to Christ and thus puts them in a special relationship with the Father as his own children. Thus the Christian because of his adoption can talk to God in the very terms used by Christ. The Trinity is the greatest of Mysteries and yet we live in the family of God, with Father, Son and the Spirit. It is Jesus Christ who joins us to himself as his brothers and sisters. Paul reminds us however, that living with Christ our brother will entail suffering. If Christ has suffered in order to enter into the glory of the Fathers so too as his brothers and sisters we will suffer. This tells us that we need to put to death the deeds of the body as we share the inheritance with Christ.

The Gospel of today is the closing passage in Matthew. It describes how Jesus commissions his disciples to carry on the work of spreading the Good News. There are only eleven disciples since Judas had gone away and the final meeting with Jesus takes place in Galilee where Jesus had told the women to inform the disciples that he would meet them there. The fact that Jesus will appear to them on a mountain is significant recalling the revelation of God to both Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai. Also Jesus previously delivered his first basic teaching from the mountain and is known as the Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus appeared before the disciples their reaction is two-fold. First they worshipped him. This is fitting since he is the Messiah and the Son of God and this appearance confirms all that. Secondly

however, we are told that they also doubted. To doubt is not the same as to deny. In a way it is a response that says this is too good to be true. It is also part of the human condition and even those who were closest to Jesus were not spared. The death and the resurrection of Jesus will always challenge and test the faith of those who believe. This was true of the people who lived during the time of Jesus and it is true for us today.

The passage speaks of the commissioning of the disciples by Jesus on his mission and declaring that all power in heaven and on earth has been given to him. He is claiming now what is rightfully his. The commissioning itself mandates that the disciples are to take the gospel globally from now on and make it available to all nations and to all people who will listen to them. The church is to be inclusive and not exclusive. Those who believe are to be baptized in the name of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the full revelation of God. This is to be the sacrament of introduction of the new chosen people into the Kingdom of God on earth. The new believers are given the possession of the Holy trinity. The commissioning also includes a teaching component. The disciples are to teach others what Jesus taught them, perhaps a reference to the Sermon on the Mount and the teaching on love relationship. Finally Jesus assures the disciples that they can rely on his presence forever. Wherever the gospel is preached, the Lord will be there. This final word is one of encouragement and strength. In all their doings and in the midst of their sufferings he will be with them with his power. He promises this not only to the eleven present there but all their successors till the end times.

The feast of the Most Holy Trinity is a mystery and a mystery is precisely something that one does not fully understand. This does not mean that we are unable to express anything at all concerning this reality; on the contrary, we are able, thanks to what Jesus told us, to describe this mystery a little and to grasp it through comparisons and images. 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 Father is at the origin of the Most Holy Trinity: he is its principle. The Father gives life to his Son: from all eternity, the Father begets his Son. The Son continuously receives life from his Father as he tells us that he lives because of the Father. 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 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.

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.

We all must have heard the story of a little boy who wanted to meet God. He knew it would be a long journey. So one day he got up early and packed his bag with some biscuits, chocolates and soft drinks and set out on his journey without telling anyone. He had walked a short distance and reached a garden and found an old woman sitting quietly and feeding pigeons. The boy went and sat next to her and kept watching her action. Then he felt hungry and took out a biscuit and was about to eat. But he looked at the old woman and shared some with her. She willingly accepted it and gave him a bright smile. He too smiled. He shared his chocolates and drink and each time she gave her a smile better than previous one. They shared no word with each other. Evening approached and the boy was tired and wanted to return home. He had but taken a few steps, he turned back and gave a hug to the old woman who hugged in return giving the biggest smile ever. The boy reached home and the mother asked him why he looked so happy. The boy said: "Mom I had lunch with God today." Before she could say anything he added, "Look mom, she had the most beautiful smile I have ever seen." The Old Woman too reached home and her son asked her why she was so happy. She responded saying, "Look son I had lunch with God today and I did not know he was so young."

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