

Feast of the Holy Trinity – Year B

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew: (Mat. 28: 16-20)

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated.

Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, “All authority, in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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We usually start every prayer meeting including the Holy Mass by making the sign of the cross, while pronouncing the words: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The Church pronounces these words on other occasions as well.

For instance these same words were pronounced by the priest as he poured the water on our head at our Baptism: “I baptise you in the name of ‘the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’” Again, whenever we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest forgives our sins “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The Priest also blesses us “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

- This formula is also used at the last rites. When a person is about to die, the following prayer is recited on him or her:

“O Christian, leave this world in the name of God the Father who created you, in the name of God the Son who redeemed you, in the name of God the Holy Spirit who made you holy”.

In today’s feast we pay homage to all three. Today, in a particular way, we remember “The Holy Three” who are at the same time “The Holy One”. Father, Son and Holy Spirit form “The Holy Trinity.”

What is that we believe of God as the Holy Trinity?

In catechism class we were taught that: There is only one God and that in one God there are three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three persons though distinct from each other, are equally wise, equally good and equally powerful, that is, they are not three Gods; there is only one God.

Our catechism teacher added that we believe this, not because we found this ourselves, or because some wise person found and told us about it, but because God himself told us that it is so.

No one can ever understand how this can really be. This is what we call “a mystery”, something which neither men nor angels can fully grasp.

- To show this, some teachers also tell the following story:

Many years ago there lived in Northern Africa a very wise and holy bishop; his name was Augustine. For days on end, the good bishop racked his brain in an effort to understand how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit can be equal and yet distinct.

One day, as the Bishop walked along the sea-shore trying to solve the problem, he saw a child playing in the sand. The child had dug up a hole, and was busy taking water from the sea and pouring it into the hole he had dug.

“What are you doing, my son?” enquired Bishop Augustine.

“Bishop, I plan to pour all the water of the sea into this hole”, replied the child.

“But don’t you see, my son”, went on the Bishop, “that this is not possible! The sea is so vast and the hole you have dug up is so very small ...!”

The child smiled and said: “Is this not exactly what you are trying to do, Bishop? God is like this vast sea, only that much more vast, and your mind, when compared with God is no bigger than this small hole I have dug ...! Dear Bishop, you will never succeed in grasping how God can be One in three persons.”

Having said this, the child disappeared; he was an angel with a message from God for Augustine and for us all: “No one can understand what God really is; only God can understand Himself.

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- Instead of asking “What is God? or How is it that the Three Divine Persons are equal and distinct at the same time?” a question which is difficult to answer, it is far more useful to ask ourselves: “What have the Three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit *done* for us?”

- There is no way of giving an exhaustive answer to this question either; only in heaven shall we come to know all that the Three Divine Persons have done to save us.

But we must keep on putting the question to ourselves and go on discovering God’s wonderful love for us day after day during life.

- There is no better time to find this out than our Sunday Service. As we proceed along the Liturgical Year, we can be compared to people climbing a mountain; the higher we climb the more wonderful the landscape below us appears.

Pentecost, the feast we celebrated last Sunday, can be compared in the Year of Worship to the top of the mountain. Having reached the top, the Church invites us to look back.

And what is it that we see on looking back?

We see the Season of Advent, the time during which we were told of the immense love with which God went on preparing man to receive his Son Jesus, the Saviour of the World.

Then we see Christmas-time, during which we discovered Jesus' love in becoming a man like us in all things except for sin; his love in spending 30 years of his life as the son of a carpenter, a carpenter himself, at Nazareth.

During the so-called "Ordinary Time in the Year", we saw Jesus preaching the Gospel throughout Palestine, curing the sick, always patient, always compassionate, leading people back to his Father.

During Lent and Easter time, we saw Jesus being tempted, suffering and dying, rising from the dead, going back to his Father, yet assuring us of his continuous presence in our midst.

And finally, on Pentecost Day, we saw Jesus fulfilling his promise of sending the Holy Spirit, thus providing us with a new life, his very own life.

The Church wants us to look at those saving deeds of the Three Divine Persons, not as a thing of the past, part of God's history of salvation of mankind, however wonderful, but as saving deeds which keep on being repeated in us, both as individuals and as a community.

In other words, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are as busy saving the world today, as they were in the past, displaying their wisdom, power and love in each one of us all along the liturgical year.

Next truth that we must remember is that it was Jesus who made the Three Divine Persons known to man. It was not any one's discovery or theory!

Various religions, besides Christianity, teach that there is only one God who created all that exists, a God who is kind and compassionate, who forgives sins as soon as man repents and who rewards with eternal life those who lead a holy life while in this world.

But no one, except Christ, could reveal to man the existence of his Father, his own existence as God's only Son, and that of the Holy Spirit, in other words, the existence of God in three persons. The one God as a community of three persons.

a) First of all Jesus made the Father known to us:

- No one else could reveal him and no one could do it better than Jesus, for the simple reason that, as he himself said, "no one knows the Father, except the Son." (Mt. 11: 27)

- Jesus told us many things about his Father but all that he said can be summed up in the two following details:

The first, that his Father is our Father too: "I am going up to my Father and to your Father" (Jn. 20: 17) "You should pray like this: Our Father in heaven..." (Mt. 6: 10)

The second, that we too are the object of his Father's love: "My Father loves you." (Jn. 16: 27)

Jesus himself told us that the final proof of his Father's love for us was to have sent him into the world to save us: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son..." (Jn. 3: 16)

b) Secondly Jesus made himself and his love known to all men and women:

- The fact of his becoming a man like us, his 30 years of hidden life at Nazareth, his announcing the Good News for three years, his passion, death and resurrection, everything is a conclusive proof of Jesus' boundless love for man. John tells us that Jesus loved us "to the end", (Jn. 13: 1) that is, he could not possibly love us more intensely than he did.

c) Thirdly Jesus made the Holy Spirit known to us:

He not only made Him known but gave Him to us. All that Jesus and the Father gave us is contained in the gift of the Holy Spirit

We Christians live by the very life that Jesus and his Father live. God shares with us his own life more intimately than a mother shares her life with the child she carries in her womb.

And the Holy Spirit living in us assures us that we are God's children:

- This is what Paul tells the Christians of Rome in the second reading. He tells them, and all of us, that the Spirit within us enables and urges us to call God "Abba"!, Father (Rom. 8: 15). This is what he teaches:

All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God; for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory.

Actually, the word "Abba", an Aramaic word, the language spoken by Jesus, does not exactly mean "Father", but "Daddy"; it is the endearing term children used to address their father, and the way Jesus invariably addressed His own. (Mk. 14: 36)

So taken up with the term were the early Christians that they kept it as Jesus had used it, without translating it into their own language.

Considering all this, who will dare doubt of the love of the Three Divine Persons for us? Is not the Church right in inviting us to praise God time and again with the prayer: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit?"

4. Our response to the love of the Three Divine Persons for us:

- In today's first reading, Moses invites the people of Israel to faithfulness to Yahweh, by recalling to them how powerfully and how lovingly God had acted with them in bringing them out of the slavery of Egypt and leading them to the Promised Land. He therefore tells them (Deut 4: 39-40):

'Hence, grasp this today and meditate on it carefully: Yahweh is the true God, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other. Keep his laws and commandments as I give them to you today, so that you and your children after you may prosper and live long in the country that Yahweh your God is giving you for ever.'

- On this Feast of the Holy Trinity, the Church invites us to do the same. It is Jesus himself who in today's Gospel shows us how best to respond to the love of the three Divine Persons: by sharing with others the treasures they have bestowed on us.

“Go, make disciples of all nations...” (Mt. 28: 19)

- It is more than an invitation; it is a command; a command for everyone. Jesus invites each one of us to bring closer to himself every person we come into contact with, those still without faith and those who already share our faith in Christ, the members of our own family, our friends, everyone. And the way to fulfil Christ's command is to do our best to lead a true Christian life. We either share God's love with others or run the risk of losing it.

- As if what we have said were not enough, Saint Paul, in the second reading, adds that the Three Divine Persons have a final surprise in store for us.

On reaching heaven, the three Divine persons will share with us all that they possess: their life, their joy, as much of it as each one will be able to take. Children inherit their parents' wealth; so shall we, says Paul, since we are God's children.

Let us conclude this reflection with the entrance antiphon of this Solemnity which sums up the meaning and purpose of this feast: “Blessed be God the Father, and his only begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit, for He has shown that He loves us” (Entrance antiphon)

Father in heaven, you gave us your Son through the work of the Holy Spirit; let the same Holy Spirit lead us back to you, the fountain of all life and happiness. We ask this through Christ our Lord. - Amen