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**Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel-St. Thomas More, NYC**  
**June 7, 2020 Streaming Mass**  
**Solemnity of the Holy Trinity 2020**

Today's feast of the Holy Trinity celebrates three divine persons in one God—an apparent contradiction, it seems. How can there be three, yet at the same time one? That is a contradiction until we recall the words of the scientist, Niels Bohr, who explored the inner workings of the atom and discovered quantum mechanics. He once said, "The opposite of a true statement is a false statement; but the opposite of a profound truth can be another profound truth." When Bohr talked about something as basic as "light," he would sometimes speak of it as being a "wave," and at other times he would speak of it as "particles." Well, which is it? It can be both depending on your point of reference, depending upon what aspect of light the scientist is dealing with at that moment. In regard to subatomic physics, in regard to quantum mechanics, our distinctions, our rules of logic are even more wanting.

My point is simply this: if we can accept the limitations of the human imagination in being able to conceive, to encapsulate, the basic structure of our world in the realm of science, why can we not accept similar limitations in speaking about God, Whom we profess to be the source of that reality? If science can use the shorthand of mathematical equations to work with the realities it is trying to understand, might we not use the insights of revelation, the texts of Scripture, to help us understand however partially, however incompletely, the reality of God to which they point? The mystery of the Trinity, God both three and one, becomes for us then not just some confusing and confounding puzzle, but a paradox that can be mined and explored to provide us with clues as what is essential about our lives.

The words we use can get in the way and cause confusion, viz., three "persons" in one God. When we think of persons we usually think of people, each with his or her own distinct personality. Are there then three different "people" in God; One Who is like a father, another like a son, and another like a ghost? No! But if not three people, what are the words describing? It helps to know from where the word "person" that we use in the context of the Trinity comes. It was not, as we might expect, from the language of human psychology, but of all places from the language of the theater, as plays were performed in ancient times. Plays were performed not inside, but outdoors in amphitheatres. The actors didn't wear makeup, but large masks to identify the characters they were playing. The mask, called a "persona," played the double role of being recognizable from a distance, and constructed in such a way that the actor's voice would be projected throughout the arena. It was the Greek word for this kind of

theatrical mask that came to be used for the three “persons” of the Trinity. (That word “persona” is still used by us today in the sense of the appearance, the face, the mask, we choose to wear before others.) The word captures a sense of the three aspects of God appearing in the Scriptures, each separate, each performing a distinctive role, each communicating in a different way, but each revealing the One God. The distinctiveness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit cannot be separated from their shared existence within the Trinity. The Trinity expresses a total giving and receiving of love. It expresses the connectedness of the Three Divine Persons, while preserving a sense of the uniqueness of each—identity in unity.

I would admit that this can seem like theological “skywriting,” so up in the air that it appears to have little to do with how we live our everyday lives. So, allow me to connect the dots. The core of our Christian faith is that we are invited to participate in this divine relationship, this eternal giving and receiving of love, that is the Trinity. We read in Genesis that we are created “in the image and likeness of God,” that the imprint of God is “hard-wired” in the very structure of our being. “Salvation” is nothing more, nothing less, than the readiness, the capacity, the willingness to stay within the matrix of the eternal giving and receiving of love that is the reality of God.

Here comes the tricky part. The Trinity is all about identity in unity, three persons in one God. In a human relationship it is all about giving and receiving love in the proper way, and usually people are better at one than the other. The challenge is about maintaining one’s identity in unity, i.e., being separate and being together, not emphasizing one over the other, in a deep relationship. In a poor relationship one may be considering just one’s own needs. The emphasis is on preserving at all costs one’s individuality, one’s separateness, one’s uniqueness. On the opposite side, a person may not be thinking of oneself at all, but only of the other. He or she may give up a sense of who they really are by getting lost in another’s identity. Their own concerns become totally enmeshed in the other’s concerns. A relationship is unhealthy either when an individual is absorbed with himself or herself, or when he or she has forgotten who they are, what they are all about, in focusing too much on the other. The goal is to strive for a balance between self-love and the giving away of self. It is the balance of the honoring of self and the willingness to engage in self-surrender. The verification of this may be the fact that those who possess the surest sense of self, those who know and honor who they truly are, are the ones who are most able to give of themselves, to surrender themselves generously and spontaneously to the other (Duns Scotus).

When we bless ourselves, when we make the sign of the Cross, when we invoke the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are placing ourselves in God’s presence,

calling to mind that we are always within God and God is within us. We are always within that matrix, that energy, that constant giving and receiving of Divine Love. If we can be aware of that, then our faith in the Holy Trinity will not be just some abstract belief, but that which gives meaning and purpose to our lives. Let this be our prayer:

God for us, we call you Father.

God alongside us, we call you Jesus.

God within is, we call you Holy Spirit.

You are the eternal mystery that enables, that enfolds, and enlivens all things.

Every name falls short of your goodness and greatness.

We can only see who you are in what is.

We ask for such perfect seeing,

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.