

**Rev. Kevin V. Madigan**  
**Church of St. Thomas More, NYC**  
**May 30, 2021 Streaming Mass**  
**Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity Year B      Mt 28: 16-20**

If you subscribe to the New Yorker magazine, you are probably familiar with a new feature in its cartoon section. Besides the usual assortment of cartoons, each week the editors provide readers with a cartoon in need of a caption. Readers are asked to submit their caption, the editors choose three finalists, and then the readers vote for their favorite. The cartoon with its winning caption is then posted about two weeks later. Let me describe this week's cartoon; maybe you can visualize it and provide a caption. It is a scene of a young couple sitting on a picnic blanket in what could be Central Park. The gentleman has a worried expression on his face and his female companion, whose face is hidden, is looking up into the sky. In the sky there is a rather unusual cloud formation. It depicts an angry face, with clenched fists on either side, staring down at the couple. Can you think of a caption? Send it to the New Yorker.

I mention this on Trinity Sunday because in many pagan religions, and today for many people without any sense of religion, that is what the deity appears to be—the angry “sky god” ready to pounce on people who step out of line or do not offer it sufficient devotion. It is the kind of picture human beings often come up with when they project some of their meanest, most nasty, most vengeful characteristics on who or what they imagine God to be like. Again, it is what human beings have come up with. The Holy Trinity, on the other hand, is God's revelation, God's disclosure of God's own self—something beyond human beings' imagining. The Holy Trinity speaks not of an isolated god who is punishing or vindictive, but a God who is constituted by the eternal giving and receiving of love. And it is this community of love that we are invited into, as we respond to the message of Jesus of Nazareth. The Trinity expresses the connectedness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, while at the same time preserving a sense of the uniqueness of Each.

If as the book of Genesis says, we are made “in the image and likeness of God,” then we bear the imprint of God's reality in the deepest structure of our being. The imprint of God is “hard-wired” into the way God has created us. ‘Salvation’ is nothing more, nothing less than the readiness, the capacity, the willingness to stay within the circle of the eternal giving and receiving of love that is the reality of God. It is to recognize our connectedness with all the things to which God is connected. It is to say “yes” to all of God's creation. It is to love everything and everyone that God loves—all that God has created. “Sin” is the state of being shut off, blocked and resistant to that eternal exchange, that back-and-forth flow of Divine Love. It is to have a hardened

heart or a cold spirit whereby we cut ourselves off from others, whereby we will not allow our deep inter-connectedness with all reality to guide us. C.S. Lewis, in his classic The Great Divorce, has the soul in hell shouting out, "I don't want help. I want to be left alone." Sin is a refusal of mutuality and a shutting down into separateness, into isolation. It is to say "no" to the flow of Divine Energy.

Here comes the tricky part. The Trinity is all about identity in unity, three Persons in one God. In a human relationship the challenge is about maintaining that identity in unity, i.e., being separate and being together. When a relationship is not working as it should, there is usually an emphasis on one or the other, on separateness or togetherness. In a poor relationship one person may be considering only his or her own needs. Here the emphasis is on preserving at all costs one's individuality, one's separateness, one's uniqueness. On the other hand, a person may be not thinking of oneself, but only of the other. He or she may then give up a sense of who in fact they are by getting lost in the other person's identity or reality. Their own concerns become totally enmeshed in the other's concerns. A relationship is not healthy 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, and focuses excessively on the other. The goal is always to strive for a balance between self-love and the giving away of self. 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 best able to give of themselves, to surrender themselves generously and lovingly.

When we bless ourselves, when we make the Sign of the Cross, when we invoke the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, what we are doing is situating ourselves, locating ourselves in God's presence, calling to mind that we are always within God and God is always within us. We are always within that force-field, that energy, that constant giving and receiving of 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, purpose and direction to our lives. Let this be our prayer:

God for us, we call you Father.

God alongside us, we call you Jesus.

God within us, we call you Holy Spirit.

You are the eternal mystery that enables, that enfolds, and enlivens all things,  
Even us and even me.

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.