

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity – A Reflection by Deacon Mike

I don't know about you, but I find that words that are used frequently become over familiar and a deliberate act of remembrance is needed to recover their fullest meaning and significance. Sadly, this can be true of the words we use often in the liturgical calendar. Take the word Solemnity, for instance. I am reminded that this word is only used for the most important occasions, usually for persons such as Our Lord Jesus or the Blessed Virgin Mary, or events such as in the Easter Triduum or the Ascension. Further, these persons or events contain the deepest mysteries of our Faith. This weekend is one of those times as we contemplate the Most Holy Trinity - worshipping the entirety and divine completeness of the infinitely holy, and infinitely loving, God to whom we owe our very existence and destiny.

How can we understand the meaning of the Trinity? This is the same question as "how can we understand God?" We cannot because God is the infinite Creator and we are finite creatures. Such concepts are deemed "Mysteries". Skeptics and unbelievers may say that this is a cop-out, but I think it is amazing that understands everything about us. Wonderfully and lovingly, he has revealed himself to us through nature, the works of God and the Scriptures, the Word of God. However, because we only see in part, we must seek to see the invisible part with the eyes of faith (see Hebrews 11). In doing so we can fully enter into a relationship with Him. The prophet Jeremiah, 29:13) says "When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart". This is a heart exercise through our daily devotions and corporate worship aided by searching the Scriptures, our knowledge Apostolic teachings and the guidance of the Church.

In the passage from Exodus in today's reading, we see that Moses has an encounter with most holy God who is revealing Divine attributes to his servant such as mercy, graciousness, forbearance, abundant love, and faithfulness. God takes the initiative and Moses responds in humility and worship. In the responsorial psalm, which is from Daniel chapter 3, Azariah and his companions, having been delivered from the fiery furnace after placing their whole trust in God, sings songs of praise to the most holy God. Both Moses and the young Israelites were responding to the revelation that they had received in their encounters with God.

We, in hindsight, know that Jesus Christ came to fully reveal God and his love to the world. Thus, when we read of God in the Old Testament, we can legitimately visualize the Holy Trinity. Contained in today's Gospel is John 3:16 which probably we can all recite "For God so loved the world..." which has been called the Gospel in a nutshell. This verse can also be seen in a trinitarian way equating God to the Father, the Son to Jesus and God's love to the Holy Spirit. After all, St. Paul asserts in Romans Chapter 3 that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit..."

In today's second reading, St. Paul's blessing to the Corinthians is clearly trinitarian in formulation and strongly indicates how the apostolic teaching of Early Church reflected trinitarian thought even though the word Trinity had not yet been coined or its implications fully

articulated or clarified. This process continued as the Church Fathers reflected on the teachings of Our Lord Jesus and the Apostles. It is no coincidence that St. Paul's blessing is much like the blessing at the end of Mass devised later.

As to how the Church describes the triune God, we now turn to the Creeds which were based on teachings passed on by the apostles and unpacked by the Church Fathers. The Nicene Creed states "I believe in the One God, the Father almighty... And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God ... true God from true God... And in the Holy Spirit... who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified..." as the hymn by Reginald Heber (to the tune Nicaea) declares:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

As discussed earlier, the above concept of the triune God is classic Mystery and is easily stated, but impossible to fully comprehend. How can God be both one and three at the same time? The best we can do is to devise analogies which always have limitations and break down if taken to logical conclusions. Many wise people have tried including Augustine of Hippo (of "The City of God" and "The Confessions of..." fame) who spent many years writing about, and contemplating, the Trinity. Another concept like this is "the Kingdom of God". Jesus used many parables which began with "the Kingdom of God is like..." It seems from the Gospels that even the disciples found that concept hard to understand. Thankfully, according to John the Evangelist, we have the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

Mary and I have an old above ground pool in our backyard. These last few years I have found opening the pool increasingly difficult because of the aging filtration system. This year I had so many problems with leaking water and air that I decided, in utter desperation, to rebuild the system with new equipment. Having an engineering background, I have worked with many systems. In a filtration system, the three main parts are a pump to retrieve water from the pool, a filter unit to remove unwanted particles from the water, and a chlorinator to treat the filtered pool water with chlorine to kill bacteria before returning the water to the pool. It can be said that there is one system made up of three distinct units. Perhaps this can be said to be analogous to the Trinity in a simplistic way or perhaps you can find one that is most helpful to you.

My prayer for us all this weekend is that the Holy Spirit will lead us all into a greater understanding of the Holy Trinity as we seek him through our prayers and worship of the holy triune God. Additionally, let us pray that we will soon be able to worship and take Holy Communion together. And finally let us pray for justice and peace in our world beginning in our own hearts. Amen!

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

