

As we begin this reflection on this Feast of the Holy Trinity, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I ask you to ponder your relationship to another person. How do you relate to President Obama?

I would suggest that most Americans relate to the President in one of three ways. For most people who live in the United States, they relate to President Obama as the political leader of the country. They are only concerned with him when he does something which directly affects our lives personally. For instance, on the question of health care, I might like or dislike him depending on whether I will be paying more or less for my new health insurance. But for the rest of our day, most Americans could not give two hoots of who is president.

Then there is a second group of people, specifically African Americans, and to some extent, people of color throughout the world, who relate to President Obama in a very different way. He is one of them; the FIRST of their race to become President of the United States, the most powerful country in the world. When he became president, he lifted up the hopes and dreams of all African Americans. I back in the 1960s how it was for Catholics when John Kennedy became the first Catholic president. His election meant that now Catholics had finally made it to the pinnacle of power in America. Everything was possible.

And finally there are those chosen few who know President Obama very personally, people like his wife, Michelle. She knows him intimately; she lives with him through his good days and bad days, his emotional ups and downs, his triumphs and defeats, his joys and his sorrows. She is committed to him in a way no other American, not even African Americans can ever fully understand.

(Pause)

As we reflect on the Mystery of the Holy Trinity today, I believe that people relate to God much as we relate to the president. Most people call upon God only when we need a favor: it may be health; it may be a job; assistance in our marriage, or how to deal with problems with our children. And if we are honest, we just don't relate to God much beyond the times we ask Him for help with our problems. We don't take time to pray, whether it is praying by ourselves or in the midst of a faith community. Yes, for most Americans, God is there...but mostly there when we need help.

Then there are those of us who experience a relationship with God in the midst of a faith community. It may be a Catholic community or a Presbyterian community or a Baptist Community or even Muslim or

Jewish community. We have our own special language, customs, prayers and expectations of God. And to the extent we are committed to that community, we are committed to the God who is the center of the community. Many of us are born into or join a community in which we are comfortable with their expectations of God (tell of Parnell's experience of his uncle and baptism in his church). We gather in communities to pray and celebrate our common belief and commitment to God. God lifts up the spirit of the whole community.

Then finally there are those who are very intimately committed to God. There are the Michelle Obamas of our religious world. They are those who, in order to be in communication with God, pray regularly on their own.

- They have experienced God's unbounded love for them personally.**
- They search what is in the heart and mind of God.**
- They try to figure out what are the hopes and dreams of God and then try to live them out.**
- They give generously of their time, talent and treasure to help build up that dream, that vision of the kingdom of God.**

Now what does all this discussion about how we relate to President Obama and God have to do with our understanding of the Holy Trinity? Well, I believe we will be able to relate to the Mystery of the Holy Trinity to the extent and depth that we relate to God.

If God is only someone we relate to only when we need a favor, then this Feast of the Holy Trinity will only be some intellectual image of three circles. (point to the banner).

If we however, relate to God as part of a faith community, we begin to understand God IN RELATIONSHIP to us as a people. Then God is dynamically relating to the human race throughout our history as a people. God has taken us out of slavery and given us freedom as His children. He has sent his Son to heal us, instruct us in the fullness of life, and love us even to death on a cross. And, through the power of his death and resurrection, Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit to bind us as a people dedicated to him and his way of living.

Yet God invites all us us to relate to Him as intimately as Michelle Obama relates to Barack.

- **We know God by name.**
- **We know that he holds us in the palm of his hand.**
- **We know the we are his beloved or as scripture says. “I am his and he is mine.”**
- **God’s mission becomes our mission.**
- **God’s hopes and dreams becomes our hopes and dreams.**
- **We grow in unity and intimacy with God who calls us into deep and last relationship.**
- **WE BECOME HIS DISCIPLES.**
- **We learn at his feet,**
- **listen to his voice,**
- **and journey with him in good times and in bad.**
- **The giving of time, talent and treasure becomes, not a requirement of community life, but a simple outpouring of communion with a God who can do nothing else but pour out his life for us.**

On this Trinity Sunday, I ask you: Where are we in our experience of God?

Do we relate to God simply as someone who can respond to our needs?

Do we experience God as center of our communal life and prayer?

Or do we come to know God through communion with him as a committed disciple and express that discipleship through a life rich with prayer and service of others?

I don't know about you, but depending on the day, I find myself in all those three categories. Scripture makes it quite clear of what God wishes for me. Today's gospel says it quite well. "God so loved the world that he gave us his only begotten son, that all who believe in him may have eternal life." And that fullness of life is not to begin some future day, it is for right here, right now.

Do I believe in the Holy Trinity? Do I live in intimate union with this communion of love called the Trinity? Not always Lord. But on this great feast day I can only say, thank you , thank you, thank you for your invitation.