

Commentary to the Holy Trinity Sunday

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity: - The Mystery of God's Love



This Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of the Trinity. Rather than give a theological explanation of the dogma, the belief of faith that we and all Christians, Catholic and non-Catholic, hold regarding the Trinity, I want to focus in on what the Trinity means to us as Church and as individuals.

The easiest place to begin is with love. The First Person of the Trinity is the Father. Jesus taught us to call His Father, Our Father. Actually, more than the formal “father” we are to call Him “Abba” or “Daddy”. This is not the view that many of us have of the First Person. We tend to see the Father only as the all powerful Creator with a view similar to the way Michelangelo presented Him on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. But the Father is Love. He created us out of love. He sent His Son to deliver us from the death that selfishness and hatred brought upon the world, to restore us to His Love. The Abba loves us.

We can certainly understand the Love of God in the Second Person, the Son. Jesus Christ is Love Incarnate, Divine Love taken on human flesh. There are many ways that He pours His Love on us,

certainly the central way was through the sacrificial love of the Cross. The manifestation of His Love that is so real to each of us is His Compassion. He looks at us and sees our struggles, whether we suffer from that imposed upon us by others, we suffer from the frailness of our bodies, or we suffer from that which we do to ourselves, our sins. The Son understands our weakness and calls us to Himself, calls us to Love. He is the Compassionate One.

Our ability to respond to the Creative Love of the Father and the Compassionate Love of the Son is infinitely more powerful than any love the human soul can produce. We have been given the Spirit of Love, the Power of Love, the Holy Spirit.

The central truth of the Trinity is that we are immersed in Divine Love.

Back in 1970 there was a Broadway Musical named *Godspel*. I don't know if many of you ever heard of it. It combined the folk music of the day and traditional Church hymns with a meditation on the Life of Jesus. One of the most famous songs repeated several times throughout the musical was called *Day by Day*. Perhaps you remember the song and the lyrics:

“Day by day. Three things do I pray. To see thee more clearly; to love thee more dearly; to follow thee more nearly, Day by day.”

The lyrics were not the creation of a Broadway songwriter. They came from a prayer written by St. Richard Chichester, a thirteenth century English saint. The Love of God, Father, Son and Spirit is reflected in these petitions.

To see thee more clearly. God created us in His image and likeness. This was the work of the Father, the Creator. A story might help here. A woman named Ann Weems was in Wisconsin to give a talk. Ann was from Tennessee and had that beautiful Tennessee drawl. During the dinner before the talk, a man who had a similar accent was introduced to her. He asked her, “Where are you from?” She replied, “I’m from Nashville.” “I thought so,” he said. “Who are your people?” he

asked. She replied, “My maiden name is Barr.” “Are you one of Tim Barr’s daughters?” he asked. “I am,” she said. Then he turned to his wife and friends and said, “She’s one of us. She’s Tim Barr’s

daughter.” And then they began talking about the people they knew from Nashville. She was part of this community all of whom had a relationship to her Father.

To see thee more clearly is to see the image and likeness of God in each other. We are his people. We live in the Love of the Divine Lover, the Father.

To love thee more dearly. This petition is about God’s gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. Again, a story can be helpful here. On October 12, 2009, Pope Benedict canonized Fr. Damien de Veuster. St. Damien is often referred to as Damien the Leper. He was the courageous priest who ministered to the poor people of the dreadful leper colony of Hawaii at Kaluapappa on Molokai Island. . He was not supposed to be there. He was sent because he had been a carpenter and could assemble a small pre-built church for the poor people. Actually, he was the second person sent. A Hawaiiin carpenter, a religious brother, had been told to re-assemble the chapel, but after the chapel was unloaded from the ship, just as the carpenter was beginning to work, many of the lepers gathered to see what was happening. The brother was so frightened by their presence that he swam back to the ship and demanded that he be taken back to Oahu. Fr. Damien, a Belgian, was then sent to assemble the chapel and then get out, hopefully within a day. He stayed. At first he was not very successful in convincing the people to come to Church. During the week he would go around the island encouraging people to come the next Sunday, but he was largely ignored. The few who did come heard him begin his homilies with, “You lepers.” One day, after returning from an long trek around the island, Fr. Damien put his aching feet into a tub of hot water. One foot didn’t feel the heat. Damien knew what that meant. He had contracted leprosy. The next Sunday he began his sermon with the words: “We lepers.” Like electricity the news spread around the island that Fr. Damien had leprosy. The next Sunday the church was filled to overflowing, and the Sunday after that and thereafter. Fr. Damien had taken on their flesh, their leprous flesh, and become one of them. They loved him more dearly because they experienced how much he loved them.

To love more dearly is to love the Second Person of the Trinity, the Incarnate God, the One who has compassion for us, the One who takes on our flesh, even our leprous flesh.

To follow thee more nearly is to allow the Spirit of God to work through our lives. The Spirit is the one who draws us into the Mystery of God. The Spirit also works through us to draw others to God. It may be difficult for many of us to understand the Holy Spirit. We want to concretize everything. The Spirit is just that, spiritual. He is God as action, God as verb, God as the very action of loving. We are quite correct when we say that we were inspired to say or do something that led ourselves or others to God. To follow thee more nearly is to allow this inspiration to take place.

The Mystery of the Holy Trinity is the Mystery of God's Love. We live in this Love, the Love of the Father who creates and sustains us, the Love of the Son, the Merciful One, who became one of us and who overflows with compassion for each of us, and the love the Spirit, the One whose presence within us gives us the ability to love as God loves.

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