

Commentary to the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity



At Confirmation, the archbishop asked the children for a definition of the Holy Trinity. A girl answered very softly, "The Holy Trinity is three Persons in one God." The archbishop, who was almost deaf, replied, "I didn't understand what you said." And the young theologian before him replied, "You are not supposed to. The Trinity is a mystery."

With the Sign of the Cross, we trace the Trinity on ourselves. We bring God into our minds first. Then we bring the Trinity down to our hearts. And, with our hearts filled with compassion, we move the Trinity across our bodies to our shoulders and arms to better bear the burdens of our family and friends. (David Walker)

The Trinity feast goes back to 12th century England and St Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. Historians say the great Thomas celebrated a Liturgy in honor of the Trinity in his cathedral. So was born the observance. In the 14th century, the feast came to be observed by the universal Church.

The belief in the Trinity goes back to the New Testament. There it is mentioned about forty times. Even if so wishing, we would not be able to lock the Trinity in a closet. The Trinity will not go away.

We open each Liturgy invoking the Trinity. We close it by calling upon those same Persons. Throughout the Christian world today, infants, who were quick enough to avoid abortion, will be received into our community through Baptism in the name of the Trinity. Into the arms of the mysterious Trinity, we will be sent by the officiating priest at our already scheduled funerals.

But the most wondrous thing in the world is the mysterious. (Albert Einstein) Our life is a faint tracing on the surface of mystery. (Annie Dillard)

The Trinity is the Mozart of mysteries. Not even Agatha Christie could solve it.

Our world is filled with mysteries. We live with them very comfortably. Scientists estimate 90% of the cosmos is mystery.

For openers, who of us here understands himself? We are still trying to figure out how water rises from the earth through the trunk and finds its way out to the leaves of a tree? The why and how of homing pigeons still mystify us. How about the infamous common cold? Many "cures" notwithstanding, that mystery is not solved. (Joseph Donders)

The New York Times wonders whether we will ever understand how the brain works. (If the Times admits to ignorance, the subject has to be a mystery.) Why do good things happen to bad people? And of course why do bad things happen to good people? How about cancer? Had enough?

Mystery and reality, wrote Walt Whitman, are two halves of the same sphere.

What Isaac Newton opined in the 18th century is as true in the 21st. "What we know is a drop. What we don't know is an ocean."

From the earliest days of the Christian era, geniuses have been wrestling with the Trinity. Most have struck out. Sometimes though, some get a Texas League single into short center field.

Rich material poured out of the busy and golden pen of the 5th century St Augustine. His conception of the Trinity is lyrical. The Father is the lover. The Son is the loved one. And the Holy Spirit is the love they send forth.

The 4th century St Patrick, with a brilliance that we Irish are justly celebrated for, found in the three leaf shamrock rising from the one stem an image of the Trinity. After telling this point to the Irish, they were never the same again. That is good or bad depending on your viewpoint of us Celts.

It is difficult for us to realize today, but questions such as the Trinity were debated in centuries past with the same intensity as we debate whether a current star is the best basketball player ever or whether a certain movie deserves an Oscar or whether Elvis is still alive. You can decide whether our civilization has progressed or regressed.

But someone has cleverly noted that, unlike other Christian doctrines, the Trinity is not a truth that leads to action. But rather, like a painting by Monet or a poem by Keats or a symphony by Beethoven, it should point us to prayer or just wonderment. Perhaps it will help us to become the prayers we recite. (Joan Chittister)

Whoever can no longer wonder or no longer marvel is as good as dead. (Einstein)

Our goal today is not to get us into the Trinity but to get the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit into us.

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