**THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY MAY 31, 2015**

On this Sunday following Pentecost the Church celebrates each year the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. This is a beautiful and fitting way to launch back into Ordinary Time in the Church's calendar. The Trinity is, after all, *the central truth of our Christian faith.* We could not call ourselves Christians if we did not profess this belief. This much was borne out very clearly for us in the early centuries, as the Church came to grapple with the reality of who Jesus is in relationship to the Father and who the Holy Spirit is in relationship to the Father and the Son. Simply put, there is no more fundamental doctrine for us as Christians than the Trinity, namely, that there is *one God* in three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For all of its importance, however, there is a real temptation to make our celebration of the Most Holy Trinity into a kind of dry, purely "academic" affair. The fact is nothing could be *less boring* than the Trinity, properly understood. The Trinity is much more than a "theological concept" we have to wrap our minds around. As our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and his predecessor, Pope Benedict, have both urged us, we need to approach God, the Trinity, not simply as an "idea" but in a deeply *personal way.* We are invited not simply to think about God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but to *encounter* this One God in three Persons. This one God, revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit desires, after all, to be in

deep personal relationship with every single human being. So much so, that the Trinity is already written into our "spiritual DNA," so to speak. As we hear in Genesis, in the story of Creation, God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." We are made in the image and likeness of the Triune God.

More than this, as Christians - through our baptism - we have to come to share in the life of this Triune God. We were baptized, as Jesus commanded before His Ascension, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." In fact, we speak of the "in-dwelling Trinity." Through Baptism the Holy Trinity dwells *in us.* How much more personal can you get?

So, if our relationship with the Trinity is to be more than a merely intellectual thing, where can we really and *personally* encounter the Trinity? There may be many answers to this question, but I would propose three "privileged places" wherein we encounter the one God in the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three places are: (I) in Scripture; (2) in the Sacraments; and (3) in human love (particularly in the family).

First, in Scripture: We have to remember that the Bible is more than just a bunch of human beings’ best attempt at telling us something about God. We believe that the texts that make up the Bible (Sacred Scripture) are *inspired* by God. And so, this is undoubtedly one of the places where the Triune God communicates to us. The Scriptures may seem confusing, even contradictory to us

at times, but this is truly the "Word of God," and we find the Trinity (though often

in veiled ways) throughout Scripture, Old and New Testament. One of those places, I already shared with you: in Genesis, where God says, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, according to *our* likeness." Now, I'm not saying that the author of Genesis had fully worked out theology of the Trinity along the lines of a St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas, but that even in this "plural" reference to the *one* God, there is trace of the Trinity.

Of course, when we get into the New Testament that which was before only hidden becomes plain to us. Here in the story of Jesus, the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit are revealed to us. And so we find *direct* references to the *one God in three persons* throughout the New Testament. An example would be in the farewell of St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, which is used now as one of the greetings at the beginning of Mass: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."

Second, we encounter the Trinity in a profound and personal way in the Sacraments. I mentioned already about Baptism, but we encounter the Trinity in the other Sacraments as well. I think of the beautiful prayer of absolution I am so blessed to hear when I go to confession and so blessed to say when others confess to me: "God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins ...." We are absolved of our sins through the action and in the

name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Of course, in our celebration of the

Eucharist we also encounter the Trinity. We begin each Mass "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" and sent forth in the same way. But above all this his whole prayer that is the Mass is *the offering of Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit,* so it is a deeply Trinitarian prayer. And all of the other sacraments, Confirmation, the Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders bear this same "mark" of the Trinity.

Third and lastly, we encounter in a very personal way the one God in three persons through human love, particularly in the family. The Trinity is described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as "an eternal exchange of love" between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, a "communion" of loving persons. Is this not also what the family is, or at least what it is *meant* to be? Of course, this extends also to the wider Christian family. We are called i n our own individual families and in the family of the Church to be a "communion" of loving persons, in the image of the God who is love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So, on this Trinity Sunday, we should not get so caught up in all of the theological intricacies of this doctrine, as absolutely important as they are. Thanks be to God our Church has theologians and teaching office to concern itself with these things. But, let us as Christian disciples come to really *know* the Trinity, the Triune God as He is revealed to us in these various ways. And through this *personal* encounter with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit now may we one day come to know that "eternal exchange of love" in heaven.