

Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

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O BLESSED THREE-IN-ONE

Every year we celebrate the feast of the Most Blessed Trinity. How do we appreciate the wonder of this highest mystery of God's inner life? We worship God in Three Persons. Not three deities but One Supreme Being who has marked us at our baptism with divine life, gained for us by Christ. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." From that moment, in a special way, God's innermost being is imprinted on the new Christian. Whoever has received the baptismal waters is redeemed and sanctified through the grace of this initial sacrament.

I once listened to a preacher say of the Trinity, "Who can figure it out?" The obvious answer is nobody: no human, no angel. I also heard it said, "I'm not interested in the mathematical aspects of the Trinity." Does that mean that God's oneness composed of Three Persons doesn't matter? We who are followers of Jesus had better be interested or we lose the fullness He has communicated to His Church and to us as its members. Our God is one, yes. We agree in this with our Jewish brethren and the worshipers of Allah. But we should consider ourselves especially favored to have been brought to a deeper knowledge of God. Within this unity, we have been told, are Three Divine Persons.

The Gospels show us Jesus gradually opening the eyes of His disciples. He asks Philip, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" (Jn 14:10) The New Testament speaks of God as the Father of Jesus 170 times. At the Last Supper, Christ says to His apostles, "Everything the Father has is Mine" (Jn 16:15). He promises them, "When the Comforter comes, Whom I shall send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth Who issues from the Father, will be My witness" (Jn 15:26).

One God: Three divine Persons. In eastern Christianity, reflection on the doctrinal basis of the Trinity focused on the Persons, particularly on the Father, Who is the unoriginated origin. That last phrase does not mean the Father is prior to the co-eternal Son but it attempts to describe the basis of relationships within the Trinity. Formulas were devised as replies to heresies in the fourth century. But they also were meant to express more clearly the devotional insights of the faithful. Praying fueled thinking.

In the west, St. Augustine was a great theologian of the Trinity. He says to us, "Since the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit Who is also called the gift of God is neither the Father nor the Son, then certainly there are Three." There we have the affirmation, but what does it convey to us? Augustine concedes our right to be perplexed. He goes on, "But when it is asked, three what?--- the great poverty from which our language suffers becomes apparent. The formulation Three Persons has been coined, not in order to give a complete

explanation by means of it, but in order that we might not be obliged to remain silent." And indeed Augustine does not remain silent. An English translation of his treatise on the Trinity amounts to 525 wonderful pages. That there are Three Persons in one divine nature does not strike us dumb even though no language is adequate in proclaiming the mystery. Love may be speechless at times before the beauty of the beloved, but eventually it will try to overflow into words. The second letter of Peter tells us of the "great and precious promises" whereby we "become sharers of the divine nature" (1:4). To know all we can of this divine nature is thus to rejoice more fully in what we have been given.

In "The Dream of Gerontius," Cardinal John Henry Newman writes in simple verse, "Firmly I believe and truly/ God is Three and God is One/ And I next acknowledge duly/ Manhood taken by the Son." Four rhyming lines summarize the faith of a great scholar.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. No, we don't comprehend the reality, but we repeat the words in praise and thanksgiving. Our God is not distant and remote from us. Human life is transformed when we recognize what being chosen by Jesus amounts to. He is the way to the Father. He sends us the Holy Spirit to be our advocate. "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16). "You are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor: 6:16). The Divine Indwelling makes of your humanity a place where the Three Persons of the Trinity take up their abode through grace.

Close to our own times, the Carmelite Blessed Elizabeth of Dijon wrote in a letter to her mother, "At every moment of the day and night the three Divine Persons are living within you. You do not possess the Sacred Humanity as you do when you receive Communion; but the Divinity, that essence the blessed adore in Heaven, is in your soul. There is a wholly adorable intimacy when you realize that. You are never alone again! If you'd prefer to think that God is close to you rather than within you, follow your attraction, as long as you live with HimThink that you are with Him, and act as you would with Someone you love. It's so simple, there is no need for beautiful thoughts, only an outpouring of your heart." (L 273).

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, help me realize how **"immeasurably generous is Your favor to us"** (Eph 1:8). Not to know the wealth I possess is to live in spiritual poverty with treasure all around me. God, You have given me unfathomable riches in opening up to me something of the sublime secrets of Your divinity. Throughout my day, remind me that You are within me, O Blessed Three-in-One.

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