

June 7, 2009

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Reading 1

[Dt 4:32-34, 39-40](#)

Moses said to the people:

"Ask now of the days of old, before your time,
ever since God created man upon the earth;
ask from one end of the sky to the other:
Did anything so great ever happen before?
Was it ever heard of?
Did a people ever hear the voice of God
speaking from the midst of fire, as you did, and live?
Or did any god venture to go and take a nation for himself
from the midst of another nation,
by testings, by signs and wonders, by war,
with strong hand and outstretched arm, and by great terrors,
all of which the LORD, your God,
did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?
This is why you must now know,
and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God
in the heavens above and on earth below,
and that there is no other.
You must keep his statutes and commandments that I enjoin on you today,
that you and your children after you may prosper,
and that you may have long life on the land
which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever."

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22](#)

R. (12b) **Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full.

R. **Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made;
by the breath of his mouth all their host.
For he spoke, and it was made;
he commanded, and it stood forth.

R. **Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,
To deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. **Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

Our soul waits for the LORD,

who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.
R. Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Reading II

[Rom 8:14-17](#)

Brothers and sisters:
For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you received a Spirit of adoption,
through whom we cry, "Abba, Father!"
The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit
that we are children of God,
and if children, then heirs,
heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,
if only we suffer with him
so that we may also be glorified with him.

Gospel

[Mt 28:16-20](#)

The eleven disciples went to Galilee,
to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them.
When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.
Then Jesus approached and said to them,
"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

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HOMILY

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. That is one of the first things that cradle Catholics learn in life. The Sign of the Cross and its recognition of the Trinity is what sets off some Christian churches from many others. It is like some fraternal groups' "secret handshake", because it identifies the signer as a Christian, probably Roman Catholic in origin. It is first and foremost a significant statement about the God we believe in.

The problem is that the concept of one Being with Three Persons is so far beyond our earth-bound comprehension that our minds tend to balk at an understanding. We can, in a sort of Stephen King psychology, understand The Many Faces of Eve, multiple personalities, not persons, in one human being. We certainly understand Larry, Mo, and Curly, three different persons but three separate men - - albeit all three stooges. But three persons in one being tends to be above the pay grade for the human mind.

The philosophical and theological understandings of the phenomenon of our God as a Trinity of persons that is one Being is coherent and intellectually satisfying for those so inclined. But it really is very abstract and so abstruse as to make this Feast to be considered the homilist's very hardest of the year.

On the other hand, belief in the Trinity is considered to be the criterion for being a Christian Church. Unitarians are not considered Christians because they do not believe in the three persons. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) are not considered Christians because they do not believe in the Holy Spirit and that Spirit's presence to a community between the first saints and the latter day ones.

The concept of three persons in one Being is, we must admit, mind-boggling for a human. Yet it is at the heart of our Faith. It is what separates Christians from others. It is one of the first things we learned as children about God, and as our Scriptures relate, it is how we have experienced God.

We do comprehend easily the three readings we just heard. In the first reading from the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy, Moses speaks of the only face of God he knew, the Creator, whom we call Father. Moses talks of the magnificence of creation, the love of God in saving Israel from bondage in Egypt, and the need to keep that Creator's statutes and commandments. In the Gospel, Jesus our Savior and Redeemer, whom we call Son, reveals the Holy Spirit and the Trinity's name in which we should be baptized. In the second reading, Paul speaks to the Romans about that Holy Spirit who bears witness that we are children of God and with our spirits allows us to cry, "Abba", daddy, "Father".

For us who live in the era of God's Holy Spirit, we are sustained, supported, nurtured by that Spirit to see God as Father, Son, Spirit - - Creator, Savior-Redeemer, Sanctifier. Jesus revealed this complexity of our God. Even if the human mind fails to grasp that complexity completely, it does not demean the importance of the quest. In our stained glass window up here overlooking our garden, we see St. Patrick with his shamrock explanation of the Trinity: one stem, one shamrock, three leaves. Each of us needs to appreciate our God as a Trinity of persons with One Being, because in the mystery of that revelation we gain insight into our God who is love.

We have experienced our God as creator-redeemer-sanctifier. We name our God as Father-Son-Spirit. We realize that our God is beyond gender or any other human attributes, even as our human mind and language limitations force us to use nouns like ears, eyes, hands, mind,

and verbs like hear, see, touch, remember to communicate with our God. Our prayer on this Feast of our God as Trinity is that our “One God, three persons, be near to the people formed in your image, close to the world your love brings to life.”

Today, let us praise our God, a Trinity of persons, one in Being, complex beyond our comprehension, yet love for us from the creation of the universe to salvation for us from the sin of Adam and Eve to sanctification for us through this community that we call Church.

As we continue this thanksgiving service, let us give God thanks by our appreciation of the mystery of your Being and by our lives lived in love as a witness to you.

Rev. Timothy K. Johnson