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The Most Holy Trinity - 4 June 2023

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4 June 2023

The Most Holy Trinity

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

The great mystery of the Trinity captures the relational dimension of God. This relational God is so completely loving that creation itself unfolds from it and all people are invited to join it.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are one with the Father and the Spirit. Lord have mercy.

You bring us to a relationship of love. Christ have mercy.

You were lifted up on a cross for us. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The Oration

God our Father, who by sending into the world
the Word of truth and the Spirit of sanctification
made known to the human race your wondrous mystery,
grant us, we pray, that in professing the true faith,
we may acknowledge the Trinity of eternal glory
and adore your Unity, powerful in majesty.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

The feast of the Trinity was first celebrated early in the second millennium, and so the Mass prayers have a slightly different feel to those found in the earliest sources. Our current prayer for Trinity Sunday is even more contemporary, as it was first created for the reform of the Missal after Vatican II. Its most unusual feature is to name God as 'Father'. The ancient prayers are most reserved about this form of appellation. Here, it identifies the divine Trinity as Father, Word and Spirit, whereas normally the language of Father would be set with that of Son as a more complete filial metaphor. In this, the prayer signals the difficulty of speaking about the triune

God! The sense of the prayer highlights God's self-revelation as triune through the incarnation of the Word and the gift of the Spirit. The response sought from God is that we profess the mystery and adore. This is a most wonderful reminder of the nature of God as revealed and sits well at the conclusion of the celebrations of the Paschal mystery and the power of the Spirit in our midst.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

The reading from Exodus is taken from section commonly titled 'The Renewal of the Tablets' where the Lord re-writes the Decalogue after they had been broken. God's mercy and faithfulness is declared.

Responsorial Psalm

Canticle: Daniel 3:52-56

Glory and praise for ever!

Our Responsorial Psalm is taken from a long song of praise from Azariah and his companions sung in a time of great persecution. Fire and calamity may abound, but God's saving presence is always among us.

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

One of the clearest trinitarian passages of the Scriptures forms our second reading. Our ecclesial family is to be a reflection of the love of the three Persons of the Trinity.

Gospel Reading

John 3:16-18

We hear from today's Gospel reading one of the most foundational statements of the Christian faith; Jesus Christ, the Son, is the love of God the Father poured out in totality, sent into the world not to condemn, but to save it.

Reflection

I recently ordered a large beach towel for a friend as a present. They wanted something with good size but still practical and I found something I thought fit the bill. This towel was made of a special microfibre material rather than the usual cotton which allowed it to be folded to an especially compact size. I was amazed when it arrived and saw it packaged into such a small pouch. A towel that expanded out to

some 180 x 100 centimetres was packed into a travel bag about 1/8 of its original size. Until I saw it pulled out and used, I almost couldn't believe the advertised size.

Today's Gospel reading features a compact package of truth that, like my compact towel, is a nugget of the Christian faith that, when one pulls it out and attempts to grasp it, expands exponentially in meaning and implication. In this case, the expansion is infinite. The verse in question is the often-touted John 3:16; 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but have eternal life.'

It is less common these days, but for some time over the last few decades, this key verse was found everywhere. Often it is just the chapter and verse 'John 3:16' displayed on car stickers, on placards in the stands at sporting events among all the other fan paraphernalia, or on t-shirts. I have even seen it as graffiti scrawled among other tags found on opportune walls.

Though a popular verse, it is rare that the greater context is referred to. At that point of the gospel narrative, Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, a prominent teacher in the Law. The exchange features a discussion on how one is to be 'reborn' to a new life. There is confusion on Nicodemus' part as he fails to see the truth of what Jesus is expressing. Then the sudden declaration of John 3:16. This statement is then followed with what is also often missed if only that verse is taken in. A response is being asked. The Gospel states that the Son has been sent out of the love of God the Father for the world, 'that the whole world might be saved'. But because God loves the world, it is not an imposition that usurps human will. We are called to respond – and the response asked is belief.

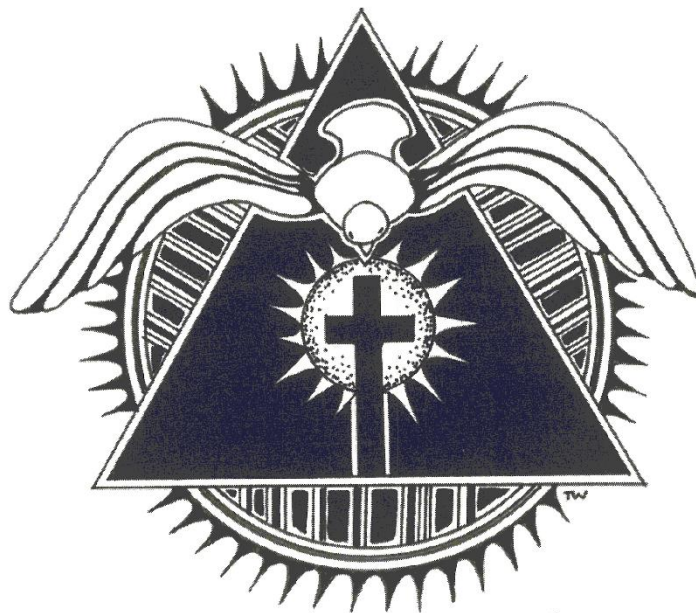
Nicodemus, a religious expert, is confused, but Jesus does not offer teaching on the Law to satisfy him, nor some other great intellectual theological explanation. Rather, Jesus indicates that 'belief' is the key. But believe in what exactly? The literal object of belief is, 'in his name'. This is complex but, essentially, Jesus is saying that what we must believe in is the very statement of John 3:16; that God loves the world, so much so, that this love pours out into the very presence of God as human.

The feast of the Trinity is a celebration of this love. Love necessarily flows from one to the other. It flows from God the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the Father. Richard of Saint-Victor famously pointed out that this is why God is a trinity – because love necessarily moves from one to another and back again, and the movement of love from one to the other is the Holy Spirit. The love between them is so perfect that the One loves the Other fully, and the One who is loved returns that love in perfect mutuality, and this Love that flows between them expresses a perfect community – wholly one while being distinct.

Perhaps that is more confusing than helpful, but it does not matter. One does not have to understand it. That is part of the point of today's reading and of today's celebration. One simply has to experience it. Indeed, one cannot help but experience it in some way because all of creation is entwined in the creative love of God. This is so because the love of God the Father and of the Son is not an exclusive mutual 'indwelling', it is also creative. In fact, it is the foundation of the very fabric of creation

– ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,’ says John, and ‘all things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.’ (1:1, 3). And even as the world rejects this creative love, God sends God’s self as the Son so that the *whole world* might be saved. To ‘be saved’ is rich in meaning, but fundamentally it means to be entwined in the perfect love of God the Father and God the Son, i.e. it means to be ‘in the Spirit’.

Jesus’ response to Nicodemus suggests that this believing is not purely intellectual. However, nor is it blind. It is built on the experience of true love given and received. The Trinity that we believe in is not something to be grasped by intellectual assent, but to be lived and experienced. In a sense, the mystery of the Trinity is ironic for it is not so much something to be understood but, rather, helps us understand. The mystery of the Trinity helps us understand what love is. The love of God, poured out for us in the presence of the Son which we continue to experience in the Spirit. Further, the Spirit also empowers us to live this love. When one truly loves another, it will be ‘others focussed’ and it will be creative. When we help someone in need, when we listen to a person in sorrow, when we forgive, when we offer compassion and mercy, when we actualise all the myriad of ways love is expressed, we are touching and living the mystery of the Trinity.



**God we praise you: Creator,
Saviour and Spirit of Love.**

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Sisters and brothers, let us turn to our triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, with our needs and the needs of our world.

Petitions

We pray for the Church in Australia and our leaders, clergy, religious and lay. As we work together towards the implementation of the Plenary Council and the Synod, may we always understand that the most important thing is that we live in relationship with God and each other.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of the world and particularly Australia. May they always work towards just relationships within their own countries and with other nations of the world.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who suffer ill health in mind and body. May the relationships that they form with their carers and medical staff support them during their difficult times.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community gathered in your love. May we continue to grow in our love of the mystery that is God: Father, Son and Spirit.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have died without knowing the love of the Trinity. May they now be embraced fully in that loving relationship towards which we all move.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who mourn. May they be comforted by the love of God shown through those who love them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the source of all goodness and love. We offer our petitions to you in the knowledge that all that we need will be given to us by our Father through the power of the Spirit in the name of the Son.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Trinity Sunday, Year A (4 June 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
All creatures of our God and king				618	446	395
Baptised in water					99	179
Father bless us			38			
Father of mercy, God of consolation				670		
Firmly I believe and truly				677	486	382
Forth in the peace of Christ we go				681	489	495
For the beauty of the earth	123			678	487	427
Glory and praise to our God	16				491	417
Holy Father, God of might				705	503	424
Holy God, we praise your name		129		710	504	411
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty				712		
I believe in God the Father					392	
I bind unto myself today				719	510	
In Christ there is no east or west				721	519	
Lord, you give the great commission					308	313
Now thank we all our God	189			755	561	425
On this day, the first of days				781		
Praise God from whom all blessings flow	10			788	394	384
Sing praise to our Creator				809	393	

Title	S&S2
Holy, holy, holy	333
O Lord, our God	247

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Daniel 3: *Glory and praise for ever!*

	CWB	JOBA	LPA
Daniel 3	318	pg. 51	pg. 74

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Hearts on fire (SHOF) [Gathering, Recessional]

Maybe we can imagine (TWB) [Gifts, Communion]