

PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

15 – 16 JUNE 2019



SUNDAY REFLECTION

As we share in the Eucharistic Banquet of the Lord we share in His divine life which He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. On this feast may we devoutly reflect on the wonder of our sharing in the Divine Life of the Most Holy Trinity through partaking in Holy Communion.

I arise today
through the strength of heaven,
light of sun,
radiance of moon,
splendor of fire,
speed of lightning,
swiftness of wind,
depth of sea,
stability of earth,
firmness of rock.

I arise today,
through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
through belief in the Threeness,
through confession of the oneness
of the Creator of Creation.

Breastplate of St. Patrick

STEWARDSHIP: Today's psalm reminds us that we have been crowned with glory and honor and given rule over the works of God's hands. But we must be good stewards, for the Lord will surely hold us accountable for the use of those gifts!

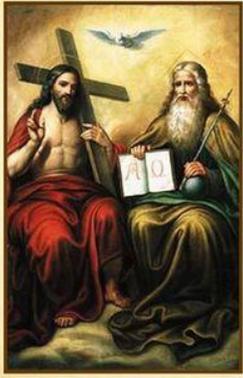
READINGS SOLEMNITY of THE MOST HOLY BODY and BLOOD of CHRIST CORPUS CHRISTI 23 JUN '19

Gn. 14:18-20: Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem, offers bread and wine and praises God for Abraham's victory.

1 Cor. 11:23-26: This is the oldest account of the Last Supper. Paul reminds his converts that when they share in the Eucharist, they are remembering and sharing in the death of the Lord.

Lk. 9:11-17: Luke's account of the multiplication of loaves and fish highlights the eucharistic dimensions of the event. For Luke, the bread is a sign of the people's solidarity with Jesus. Breaking bread with Jesus and belonging to His kingdom go hand in hand.


THE ONENESS OF GOD



God's oneness is indispensable, because the supreme being must be unique, without equal: If God is not one, He is not God. (CCC 228)

Faith in three Divine Persons is not contrary to belief in the One God, because these Persons are united in one essence, substance or nature entirely simple. (CCC 202)


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THE HOLY TRINITY

Perhaps the deepest, the most profound of all mysteries is the mystery of the Trinity. The Catholic Church teaches the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Godhead contains three distinct and separate persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three Gods, but one God in three persons. "The Divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 253)

We came to know this immense mystery because Christ revealed it to us. Just before ascending He told them: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). We know that these Three are not just different ways of looking at one person. For at the Last Supper, Jesus told us: "I came forth from the Father." So He is different from the Father. But He also promised: "If I go, I will send Him [the Paraclete] to you. . . . He will guide you to all truth" (John 16:28, 7, 13). So the Holy Spirit is also different. Even though the Three Persons are One God, yet they are distinct: for the Father has no origin, He came from no one. But the Son is begotten, He comes from the Father alone. The Holy Spirit comes or proceeds from both the Father and the Son. These different relations of origin tell us there are three distinct Persons, who have one and the same divine nature.

Even though everything the Three Persons do outside the Divine nature is done by all Three, yet it is suitable that we attribute some works specially to one or the other Person. So we speak of the Father especially as the power of creation, of the Son as the wisdom of the Father, of the Holy Spirit as goodness and sanctification.

The two doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation are the foundation of Christian life and worship. By becoming man, God the Son offered us a share in the inner life of the Trinity. By grace, we are brought into the perfect communion of life and love which is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This sharing in the life of the Trinity is meant to culminate in heaven, where we will see the three Persons face to face, united to them in unspeakable love.

“During the first centuries the Church sought to clarify its Trinitarian faith, both to deepen its own understanding of the faith and to defend it against the errors that were deforming it. This clarification was the work of the early councils, aided by the theological work of the Church Fathers and sustained by the Christian people’s sense of the faith.” (CCC 250)

Even though the word Trinity cannot be found anywhere in scripture there are numerous references to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. In the Old Testament the Father and the Holy Spirit are evident, but the Son is only alluded to. Without the teaching of the New Testament one would not be aware of the concept of a triune God. The early church struggled to put together a workable definition for the concept of a triune God. One of the clearest Old Testament indicators of the Trinity is found in the book of Isaiah. In chapter 48, verse 16 it can be argued that it is the Son speaking. He refers to God (the Father) and to the Spirit. In the next verse the Son is identified as the Lord your God. It was not until the First Council of Nicaea in 325 that the Trinity became part of church doctrine and a century or more later that the doctrine of the trinity took on the form it has maintained ever since.

“Draw near to me, hear this! From the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there. And now the Lord God has sent me and his spirit. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go” (Is. 48:16-17).

Other statements in the Old Testament allude to God being with others of the same rank when the plural form of the word for God is used.

“The Hebrew word for God is Elohim. Elohim is a plural noun but it is used here with a singular verb bara. In the remainder of the Old Testament, when Elohim speaks of the true God, it is always used with a singular verb. The conclusion to be drawn is that in some sense God is both singular and plural. The doctrine of the Trinity states this – within the nature of the one God there are three eternal persons” (quote from Don Stewart, "The Bible Explorer").

“Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

There are many obvious references to a triune God in the New Testament. Two of the best known examples are the following:

“And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Mt. 3:16)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (Mt. 28:19)

Although the belief in the Trinity is part of church teaching and is confirmed every Sunday when the Creed is recited at Mass it is difficult to articulate what this really means. A complete understanding of this doctrine is beyond the finite human mind to comprehend, but one can

glean a number of truths from the teaching of a Triune God. Even though they are individuals with distinct characteristics and responsibilities the Trinity always exists in complete harmony. From this one can deduce humankind's need for others if life is to be worthwhile, and in the possibility for cooperation and peace to exist among all people. Ultimately though, one must accept the doctrine of the Trinity on faith and be content to rest in the mystery of God.

ALTAR Continued

Why is the altar a sign of Christ?

During the Entrance Procession, when the priest and his ministers reach the entrance to the sanctuary, they make a sign of reverence, a bow of the body to the altar. (If the tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament is in the sanctuary, then instead of bowing to the altar, they should genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament.) Then the priest ascends to the altar and kisses it before going to his chair; the deacon kisses the altar as well. On particularly solemn occasions, the priest may even bless the altar with incense. Why is all this attention paid to the altar? Because **the altar is a sign of Christ**; according to one of the Prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayer during the Easter season, Christ is the "*sacerdos, altare et agnus*" ("priest, altar, and lamb") of His sacrifice. (This expression can be traced to St. Cyril of Alexandria and Origen.) It is easy to recognize Christ as the priest and the lamb (that is, the victim); why He is the altar deserves some explanation to our modern minds. St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the fourth century and spiritual father of St. Augustine, took the image of Christ-as-altar for granted in his treatise *De Sacramentis*, where he writes (without much explanation) that "the altar is a type [i.e. sign] of the body [of Christ]" (Book IV, 7) and then again almost as an aside, "for what is the altar but the type of the body of Christ?" (Book V, 7)

Consider first the composition of the altar. Traditionally, the altar is made of stone and is immovable – although some countries, such as the United States, may use wood for the altar, provided it is "worthy, solid, and well-crafted." (GIRM 301) Why stone for the altar? St. Paul speaks of Christ as "the supernatural Rock" that accompanied the Israelites in the desert during their exodus from Egypt, the Rock from which flowed water for their sustenance. (1 Cor. 10:4; cf. Ex. 17:6) Sts. Paul and Peter identified Christ as the "cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6), and Jesus used this language referring to Himself. (cf. Luke 20:17-18) The concept is found in Psalm 118:22-26, the very same psalm that the inhabitants of Jerusalem sang as Jesus entered their city.

Not only is Christ "that living stone" (1 Pet. 2:4), but we too are called to be "living stones." (1 Pet. 2:5) This means the altar is also a sign of the Church, made up of diverse people, living stones, gathered and built into one, in peace and unity. St. Paul described the Church as being made up of those Jews and Gentiles who accepted Christ, and that Christ "is our peace, who has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one." (Eph. 2:14) Jesus "kissed [this altar, the Church] in the middle" with the "holy kiss of peace and unity" (*Douay Catechism* 125), so the priest imitates Christ in kissing the altar and in doing so, shows "a sign of his affection and close adherence to Christ." (*The Glories of the Catholic Church*, p. 222)

Now consider what takes place on the altar. An altar is a place of sacrifice, a place of offering something to God, a place of encountering God. Jesus offered Himself on earth on the "altar of the cross," and that offering is now made present on the Church's altar. The altar is related to our Lord's Passion and represents the cross, so the priest bowing before the altar "signifies the

prostrating of Christ in the garden, when he began his passion.” (*Douay Catechism* 125; cf. Matt. 26:39) Jesus went so far as to identify the Temple (and its altar) with Himself: Jesus [said], “Destroy *this temple*, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he spoke of *the temple of his body*. (John 2:19-21)

“For which is greater, *the gold or the temple* that has made the gold sacred? ... For which is greater, *the gift or the altar* that makes the gift sacred?” (Matt. 23:17-19)

Jesus is the “gift” being offered on the altar, but He makes it clear that the altar makes the gift sacred; you certainly would not offer a sacrifice on an altar less dignified than the sacrifice itself. That makes Jesus (Who sanctifies) both the gift *and* the altar.

Rev. Maurice de la Taille, SJ, meditating upon Christ as altar in his 1915 book *The Mystery of Faith*, illuminates further:

Those who desired to offer sacrifices to God, had to do so necessarily through an altar. But Christ, the Victim of salvation, approached to God *through Himself*. Hence He was also the altar of His own sacrifice. *For us too* in like manner, He is the altar of every one of our sacrifices, for we can bring no offering to God except through Christ. (Chapter 5, Section 2)

NOT ONLY DID CHRIST approach the Father through Himself as an altar, but now Christ is our altar through Whom we approach the Father. St. Paul exhorted the Romans, “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *spiritual worship*.” (Rom. 12:1) This thought was taken up by St. Peter who completed it when he wrote that we are “to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God *through Jesus Christ*.” (1 Pet. 2:5) It is no accident that we offer our prayers to God “through Christ our Lord.”

In the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, two prayers accompany the approaching and kissing of the altar. As he ascends the steps to the altar, the priest prays that the Lord remove our iniquity so that we might enter the *Sancta Sanctorum* (“Holy of Holies”) worthily, with pure minds. This prayer is not present in the Ordinary Form. In the Extraordinary Form, the Penitential Act happens *before* the priest goes to the altar, while in the Ordinary Form, the Penitential Act happens *after* he has gone to the altar. This may explain this prayer’s omission from the Ordinary Form, but the priest should still be aware of its sentiment as he approaches the altar of sacrifice. In the prayer that accompanies the kissing of the altar, the priest asks God pardon for his sins, by the merits of His “saints whose *relics* are here” and of all the saints. While this prayer is not found in the Ordinary Form, the Church has retained the ancient tradition of placing relics of saints within the altar stone. (GIRM 302) This practice calls to mind the early history of the Church, when persecuted Christians used martyrs’ tombs for altars. (*Baltimore Catechism III*937) By kissing the altar above the place where the relics are reserved, the priest silently declares his union with and affection for the saints who have gone before him. This kiss is a “holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16), a “kiss of love” (1 Pet. 5:14), for Christ and for His Church and her members. It is a kiss by which we begin to learn that the liturgy is “the purest and most sublime school of love.” (*The Splendour of the Liturgy*, p. 38)

PRAYERS

PRAYER TO THE HOLY TRINITY

I Adore Thee, O my God, one God in three Persons; I annihilate myself before thy Majesty. Thou alone art being, life, truth, beauty, and goodness. I glorify Thee, I praise Thee, I thank Thee, and I love Thee, all incapable and unworthy as I am, in union with thy dear Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Father, in the mercifulness of his heart and through his infinite merits. I wish to serve Thee, to please Thee, to obey Thee, and to love Thee always, in union with Mary immaculate, Mother of God and our Mother, loving also and serving my neighbour for Thy sake. Therefore, give me Thy Holy Spirit to enlighten, correct, and guide me in the way of Thy commandments, and in all perfection, until we come to the happiness of heaven, where we shall glorify Thee forever. Amen.

~ Prayer by Pope Pius X, 1906



HOLY TRINITY SERIES

THE HOLY TRINITY



If we take a look at our self, each human is made up of a mind, a body, and a soul, and yet we are still only one person.

A fire has flames, heat, and light, but yet it is still just one fire.

When you hear a person's speech, you are hearing three things - his words, his thoughts, and his voice, yet it is still one speech.

GOD - the **Father**, the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit**. Three Persons, yet **One God** in Trinity. The Holy Trinity.

Lifted from <http://www.catholicbible101.com/theholyltrinity.htm>

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Eric Burgin

50.10

"You're on in ten minutes."