

PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

6 – 7 JUNE 2020



SUNDAY REFLECTION

It was probably the first prayer we were taught as children – to bless ourselves – ‘In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’. Each decade of the Rosary ends with Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Every part of the Church’s Divine Office also begins with the Gloria, just as all the official prayers of the Church, including the Great Thanksgiving or Eucharistic Prayer, are addressed to the Father, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit.

It’s common for us, then, to call on the Trinity, but probably not so common to reflect on just what is meant by saying that there are three Persons in the God we believe in. Who is this God? Can we find some way of speaking about God which is helpful?

We cannot know God in god’s own self, but only in relationship to us. One way I have found helpful is to understand – and to experience – God as the One who is for us, rather than against us. If you can remember/think of someone who you knew was there for you: somebody who was on your side, who was always rooting for you, whose support you can rely on, somebody

who believed in you, who will spoke up for you: unambiguously there for you when you needed them, someone whose loyalty you could count on ... I remember a man telling me about his father, who he always knew was there for him: right from when he was a child. His father came to watch him playing football – and to voice his support from the side-line. That’s what we mean when we speak of God as our Father/our Mother: you can rely on God to be there for you, to be on your side.

God is also the One who is with us, standing shoulder to shoulder with us, alongside us. He’s in solidarity with us, identifies with our situation. He understands what you’re going through; empathizes with you. God can stand in your shoes and feel your pain. God is wounded by your wound. He shares your joys, your sorrows, your dilemmas, your struggles. Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Mary, became one of us. He is God made flesh: He was fully human, like us in every way – except He never sinned. So, He is Emmanuel – a name which means ‘God is with us.’ He promised: ‘know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time’ (Mt. 28:20).

And God is the One who is in us. He is in us as a source of energy and power and strength, as a source of joy and life and inspiration. Dwelling within us, God gives us comfort, light, warmth, and wisdom. God brings cleansing and freshness, healing and guidance. That is what we call God the Holy Spirit – the One who has been poured into our hearts. But sadly, many of us never discover the Holy Spirit. He remains an undiscovered and unused treasure buried within us. That Spirit of truth, you know Him, because He is with you, He is in you ... (Jn. 14:17)

So this is our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the One who is for us, with us, in us.

This is the God in whose image and likeness each one of us is made. Made in God’s image and likeness, but also called to grow ever more fully into that image and likeness. That’s what happens when I really try to be someone who is there for others, when I’m with them in solidarity and compassion. When I’m present to others as a source of strength and inspiration and comfort and healing, then I’m God-like. These are many ways of loving, and they’re how we become more and more like the God who is Love. On this great feast, as we celebrate and worship the Most Holy Trinity, our prayer is heartfelt: that today and every day of our lives, we become more and more God-like in our love. Let us say: ‘Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.’

STEWARDSHIP: The Gospel today is sometimes called “the Gospel in miniature” because it so concisely sums up the Gospel message. In even more condensed form, “God love ... God gave ...” is the paradigm for stewardship - we give because we love.



READINGS FOR SOLEMNITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI

14 JUN '20

Dt. 8:2-3, 14-16: Later generations of Israelites are invited to reflect on the Exodus, the founding event of their nation, as though they had participated in it themselves, along with their ancestors. The manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness was not merely designed to satisfy their hunger but to show them that they depended on God's guidance and God's goodness.

1 Cor. 10:16-17: Paul reflects on the meaning of the Eucharist, and that sharing in this sacred meal is a sign of the unity of those who take part. Through the Eucharist, we become one with Christ and with each other. We share one bread, one faith, one life in Christ.

Jn. 6:51-58: Jesus declares that through offering His flesh, He will bring life to the world. In the Eucharist, we proclaim Christ's offering of His body on Calvary, through which He has given us life and hope. The Eucharistic bread and wine are truly the Body and Blood of Jesus, and offer us eternal life.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ON THE HOLY TRINITY

Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

The mystery of the Holy trinity is the most fundamental of our faith. On it everything else depends and from it everything else derives. Hence the Church's constant concern to safeguard the revealed truth that God is One in nature and Three in Persons.

In order to do some justice to this sublime subject, we shall look only briefly at the heretical positions that at various periods of the Church's history challenged the revealed Trinitarian faith. Our principal intention is to see in sequence the development of the doctrine, with emphasis on how the Church's authority has contributed to the progress in understanding the plurality of persons in the one true God.

There is also great value in seeing some of the implications of the doctrine for our personal and social lives, since the mystery was most extensively revealed by Christ during the same discourse at the Last Supper when He taught us the "New Commandment" by which we are to love one another as He has been loving us.

Trinitarian Heresies

There is a certain logic in the adversative positions assumed by those who called into question one or another aspect of the Trinity. Not surprisingly the human mind has wrestled with what God revealed about Himself in His inner Trinitarian existence. And depending on the

willingness to recognize its limitations, the intellect has been enlightened by what God says about His mysterious being.

Thus we have, on the one hand, such extensive treatises as St. Augustine's *De Trinitate* that show how perfectly compatible is the mystery of the Triune God with the deepest reaches of human intelligence. Indeed, the better the Trinity is understood, the more the human mind expands its horizons and the better it understands the world that the Trinity has created.

At the same time, we have the spectacle of another phenomenon. Minds that are not fully docile to the faith have, in greater or less measure, resisted the unquestioning acceptance of the Trinity. From apostolic times to the present, they have struggled with themselves and in their misguided effort to "explain" the mystery have only rationalized their own ideas of what the mystery should be.

For the sake of convenience, we can capulize the leading anti-Trinitarian teachings of Christian history. Although give here somewhat chronologically, they are all very current because one or another, or a combination of several, may be found in contemporary writings in nominally Christian sources. There is no such thing as an antiquated doctrinal error, as correspondingly there is no such thing as an entirely new heresy. Error has its own remarkable consistency.

Monarchianism

By the end of the first century, certain Judaizing Christians lapsed into a pre-Christian notion of God. According to them God is simply unipersonal. Such were the Corinthians and the Ebionites.

Within the next hundred years these theories were systemized into what has since become known as Monarchianism, i.e., *monos* = one + *archein* = to rule, which postulates only one person in God. In practice, however, Monarchianism affected certain positions regarding the nature and person of Christ, and these were the ones that finally had to be countered by the Church's Magisterium.

If there is only one person in God, then the Son of God did not become man except as the embodiment of an adopted son of God. According to the Adoptionists, Christ was a mere man, though miraculously conceived of the Virgin Mary. at Christ's baptism, He was endowed by the Father with extraordinary power and was then specially adopted by God as son. Among others, the best known Adoptionist was Paul of Samosata.

Another group of Monarchians took the view that Christ was divine. But then it was the Father who became incarnate, who suffered and died for the salvation of the world. Those favoring this idea were called Patripassionists, which literally means "Father-sufferers," meaning that Christ was only symbolically the son of God, since it was the Father Himself who became man. On this hypothesis, of course, the Father, too, is only symbolically Father, since He does not have a natural Son.

The best known Patripassionist was Sabellius, who gave his name to a still popular Christological heresy, Sabellianism. According to Sabellius, there is in God only one hypostasis (person) but three *prosopa*, literally "masks" or "roles" that the unipersonal God assumes. These three roles correspond to the three modes or ways that God manifests Himself to the world. Hence another name for this theory is Modalism.

In the Modalist system, God manifest Himself, in the sense of reveals Himself, as the Father in creation, as the Son in redemption, and as the Holy Spirit in sanctification. There are not really three distinct persons in God but only three ways of considering God from the effects He has produced in the world.

Subordinationism

Unlike the foregoing, Subordinationism admits there are three persons in God but denies that the second and third persons are consubstantial with the Father. Therefore it denies their true divinity. There have been different forms of Subordinationism, and they are still very much alive, though not all easily recognizable as Trinitarian errors in which the mind tries to comprehend how one single infinitely perfect divine nature can be three distinct persons, each equally and completely God.

The Arians, named after the Alexandrian priest Arius, held that the Logos or Word of God does not exist from eternity. Consequently there could not have been a generation of the Son from the Father but only by the Father. The Son is a creature of the Father and to that extent a “son of God.” He came into existence from nothing, having been willed by the Father, although as “the first born of all creation,” the Son came into the world before anything else was created. The Semi-Arians tried to avoid the extreme of saying that Christ was totally different from the Father by conceding that He was similar to or like the Father, hence the name Homoi-ousians, i.e., homoiος=like=ousia=nature, by which they are technically called.

There was lastly the group of Macedonians, named after Bishop Macedonius (deposed in 360 AD), who extended the notion of subordination to the Holy Spirit, who was claimed not to be divine but a creature. They were willing to admit that the Holy Spirit was a ministering angel of God

Tritheism

At the other extreme to saying there was only one person in God was the heresy that held (and holds) there are really three gods. Certain names stand out.

According to John Philoponus (565 AD), nature and person are to be identified, or, in his language ousia=hypostasis. There are then three persons in God who are three individuals of the Godhead, just as we would speak of three human beings and say there are three individuals of the species man. Thus instead of admitting a numerical unity of the divine nature among the three persons in god, this theory postulates only a specific unity, i.e., one species but not one numerical existence.

In the theory of Roscelin (1120 AD), a Nominalist, only the individual is real. So the three persons in God are actually three separate realities. St. Anselm wrote extensively against this error.

Gilbert of Poitiers (1154 AD) said there is a real difference between God and the Divinity. As a result there would be a quaternity, i.e., three persons and the Godhead.

Abbot Joachim of Fiore (1202 AD) claimed that there is only a collective unity of the three persons in God, to form the kind of community we have among human beings, i.e., a gathering of like-minded persons joined together by their freedom to work together on a common enterprise Joachim of Fiore is also known in doctrinal history as the one who projected the idea of three stages in Christian history. Stage One was the Age of the Father, through Old

Testament times, Stage Two was the Age of the Second Person, the Son, which lasted from the time of the Incarnation to the Middle Ages; Stage Three began about the time of Abbot Joachim and will continue to the end of the world, as the Age of the Holy Spirit.

Anton Guenther (1873) was deeply infected with Hegelian pantheism and proclaimed a new Trinity. Guenther said that the Absolute freely determined itself three successive times in an evolutionary process of development as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. So the divine substance is trebled.

Post-Reformation Protestantism

The original Reformers affirmed the Trinity without qualification. Thus Luther and Calvin, and the sixteenth century confessions of Protestant faith uniformly attested to the Trinity of Persons in God. But the subjectivism of the Protestant principles paved the way to a gradual attrition of the faith, so that rationalism has made deep inroads into the denominations. The most common form of this rationalism takes the three persons in God as only three personifications of the divine attributes, e.g., divine power is personified by the Father, divine wisdom by the Son, and divine goodness by the Holy Spirit.

In this context, we may define rationalism as that system of thought that claims that the human mind cannot hold with certainty what it cannot understand. Since the Trinity cannot be fully understood, it cannot therefore be held to be certain.

Continued next week **“Teaching of the Church”**

HOLY COMMUNION

After a long wait the children of the parish who had been preparing to receive their First communions are beginning with this weekend able to do just that. As the class of some 70 children begin to receive the Sacrament in small groups over the next weeks we will be examining aspects of this Sacrament. In this first installment we turn to Pope Francis' comments on receiving Communion.

Receive Communion every time as if it were the first time, pope says

Every time a Catholic receives Communion, it should be like his or her first Communion, Pope Francis said.

Marking the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ on June 23 2019 the pope spoke about the gift of the Eucharist during his midday Angelus address at the Vatican and at the Rome parish of Santa Maria Consolatrice, where he celebrated an evening Mass and led eucharistic Benediction after a Corpus Christi procession.

The feast, he told visitors in St. Peter's Square, is an annual occasion for Catholics "to renew our awe and joy for the stupendous gift of the Lord, which is the Eucharist."

Catholics should concentrate on receiving Communion with gratitude every time they receive it, he said, rather than approaching the altar "in a passive, mechanical way."

"We must get used to receiving the Eucharist and not go to Communion out of habit," the pope said. "When the priest says to us, 'The body of Christ,' we say, 'Amen.' But let it be an 'Amen' that comes from the heart, with conviction."

"It is Jesus, it is Jesus who saved me; it is Jesus who comes to give me the strength to live," Pope Francis said. "We must not get used to it. Every time must be as if it were our first Communion."

Later, celebrating an evening Mass on the steps of the Rome parish of Santa Maria Consolatrice, about six miles east of the Vatican, Pope Francis' homily focused on the Gospel story of the multiplication of the loaves and the connection between the Eucharist and blessings.

"When one blesses, he does not do something for himself, but for others," like Jesus did when he blessed the five loaves and two fish before they were miraculously multiplied to feed the crowd, the pope said. "Blessing is not about saying nice words or trite phrases; it is about speaking goodness, speaking with love."

The Mass is "a school of blessing," the pope said. The people gathered for the Eucharist are blessed, they bless the Lord, and they, in turn, are sent forth to be a blessing to the world.

"It is sad to think of how easily people today speak words not of blessing but of contempt and insult," the pope said. "Sadly, those who shout most and loudest, those angriest, often appeal to others and persuade them.

"Let us avoid being infected by that arrogance," he said. "Let us not let ourselves be overcome by bitterness, for we eat the bread that contains all sweetness within it."

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves also is a lesson in giving, a lesson Jesus taught in a supreme way by giving up his life and giving himself in the Eucharist, the pope said.

Taking the small basket of food offered by a boy and feeding a multitude with it shows that "whatever we have can bear fruit if we give it away — that is what Jesus wants to tell us — and it does not matter whether it is great or small."

"Being simple and essential, bread broken and shared, the Eucharist we receive allows us to see things as God does," the pope said. "It inspires us to give ourselves to others. It is the antidote to the mindset that says, 'Sorry, that is not my problem,' or, 'I have no time, I can't help you, it's none of my business.' "

PRAYERS

I bind unto myself today
The strong name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same,
The three in One and One in Three.
I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,
The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.

(Breastplate of St. Patrick)

Prayer for Zeal

O Lord, our God, we believe in Thee, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
As far as I have been able, as much as Thou hast given me the power to do so,
I have sought for Thee.
I have desired to see that in which I believe; much have I striven and labored.

Lord, my God, my only hope, let me never tire of seeking Thee, but make me seek
Thy face with constant ardor.
Give me the strength to seek after Thee – Thou who has made me find Thee,
Who hast give me more and more the hope of finding Thee.

Thou seest my strength and my weakness; do Thou sustain the one and heal the other;
Thou seest my strength and my ignorance.
Where Thou hast opened to me, come make me welcome; where Thou hast closed to me,
Open to my plea.
Give me to remember, understand, and love Thee.
(St. Augustine)

Prayer of Thanks

O eternal God! Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the beginning and end of all things;
In whom we live and move and have our being;
Prostrate before The in body and soul, I adore Thee.
I bless Thee and give Thee thanks.
What return can I make to Thee, O God, for all that Thou hast done for me?
I will bless Thy Holy Name, and serve Thee all the days of my life.
Bless the Lord O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His Holy Name. Amen

Prayer to the Most Holy Trinity

Omnipotence of the Father, help my weakness, and deliver me from the depth of misery.
Wisdom of the Son, direct all my thoughts, words and actions.
Love of the Holy Ghost, be thou the source and beginning of all the operations of my soul,
Whereby they may be always conformable to the divine will.

Blessed be God the Father who has created us
Blessed be God the Son who has redeemed us
Blessed be God the Holy Spirit who has sanctified us
Blessed be the Holy and undivided Trinity now and for ever. Amen
(Fr. Thomas Augustine Judge)