

TRINITY SUNDAY 2020

Reflection

Fr Tao Pham

This weekend we celebrate the central mystery of our Faith, the distinctively Christian truth that God is a Trinity of Persons. The Jewish people believe in God. The Muslims believe in God. Many ancient faiths believe in God. It is distinctive to the Christian to believe that God Is One in three Persons.

The first thing our parents probably taught us about our religion was the Sign of the Cross, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The last thing a priest will do at our graveside is make the Sign of the Cross over our remains, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Between those two moments, a Christian's life is lived with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

A person might wonder what the Trinity has to do with his or her life. The doctrine is both profound and very personal. It is, first of all, profound. There is only one God. Yet, this God is three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three are distinct. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Each of these three Persons is really and truly God, but still, there is only one God.

We would never have come to this knowledge ourselves if God had not revealed it. God gave us a glimpse into his own inner life as a powerful circle of love. The Father gives the Son all He has and the Son is the perfect image of the Father. Between them there is a love so powerful that it is called the Holy Spirit. God is an eternal, powerful tornado of love and a mystery that forever escapes our full comprehension.

Scripture speaks to us more personally about the Trinity and provides a link between the inner life of God and us. Scripture tells of a Father who created children in His own image and likeness. He breathed into them the very breath of life. He wanted the best for them. But they rebelled and went their own way. Despite their rebellions and infidelities, the Father never abandoned His children as we see in today's first reading. God is a Father whose discipline was always meant to heal and make strong. He is a Father who gave His children law, prophets and a promise of lasting care for them called the covenant.

Scripture tells of a Father who so loved the world that he gave his only Son to that world that whoever believes in the Son might have eternal life. It tells of a Son, equal to the Father, who took on human nature. He was obedient to the Father and had a love for us that climaxed in death, a Son who left us on the eve of his death his own self as food to strengthen us and unite us with him. The Son promised that if we follow him, the Father will love us all the more and both will make a home with us. The Son promised to send us a Helper to enable all that to happen.

Scripture tells us of that Holy Spirit dwelling within us who immerses us into a spiritual fellowship called the Church and endows us with strengths and gifts to follow Christ, a Spirit who draws us into communion and communication with the Lord Jesus, a Spirit who abides in our deepest self. It is impossible for us to understand God. God is a mystery. However, to say that something is a mystery doesn't mean we can't know anything about it. It just means that we can't know everything about it. Faith doesn't contradict reason; it transcends it. It is impossible to know of the existence of God by our own reasoning. At the sight of something or other, a person will know in an instant that things do not exist through themselves - as a house implies a builder, a dress a wearer, a door a carpenter, so the world implies a Creator. But we would know very little about God if God hadn't revealed himself to us. It is especially through the Scriptures that we know God. From the Scriptures we learn that God is Father, Son and Spirit and from the Scriptures we also learn what God is like. For instance, today's First Reading says that God is 'a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness.' And the Gospel says: 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life.' Both readings have the same message: God is a God of love. This is something tremendously important to know about God. If we knew nothing else about God, that would be enough.

God loves us, not because we are good, but because he is good. Our very existence is a sign of God's love. God's love for us is the Good News. That love has taken flesh in the person of Jesus and that love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. What should our response be? We must strive to become imitators of God's goodness. This means that we must love one another. What St. Paul said to the Corinthians (Second Reading) is meant also for us: 'Help one another. Be united; live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you.' Where love is, God is. The Trinity is a great mystery but it is a mystery of love.

We know God the Creator who sustains our world and gave to each one of us the precious gift of life with a purpose. But we have rebelled. We all know God the Redeemer who gave his life that we might be free of sin and might have the gift of eternal life. We all know God the Sanctifier who guides us through conscience and helps us to live as the people of God that we are all called to be. This weekend we celebrate the Trinity not as an abstract dogma but as an active presence in our life. The meaning of this uniquely Christian doctrine of the Trinity is as disarmingly simple as it is theologically exciting. God is very close to you and me. We meet God in the created world around us that we experience every day. We meet the same God in the Church and its sacramental life to bring us Christ's cleansing, saving power. We meet the same God in the depths of our soul in the Holy Spirit. The same God is present in creation, on the Cross, and in our hearts. It is a deeply liberating truth to realize that God is not far away. He is close to us in many ways as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To be a Christian is to have the privilege and the power to know God as all three. Father, Son and Holy Spirit: God who sustains, who redeems, and who makes holy. For so many people, even today, the proclamation that there is a God is increasingly difficult. Even more difficult to believe is that God is three persons and yet still one God. It can take a person many years to believe completely in the Trinity.

There is no way that we can ever understand this teaching completely. For many, the only way to understand the Trinity is through Jesus Himself. When we begin to walk with Jesus, we must begin to look at reality the way that He looks at reality.

There is a story about the mystery of Trinity:

“One day two learned men were walking along the seashore, discussing the mystery of God. However, they weren’t making much progress. Suddenly they came upon a small boy playing on the beach. He had dug a hole in the sand and kept running down to the sea, dipping his toy bucket in the water, and running back up the beach to empty the water into the hole. The two men watched him for a while as he ran back and forth, filling and emptying his bucket. They found the scene amusing. They went up to the boy and asked him what he was doing. Very seriously he told them he was emptying the ocean into the hole he had dug in the sand. The two men smiled, and walked on, resuming their discussion about God. After a while, one of them stopped and said to the other, ‘You know, we were amused just now when that child told us what he was trying to do. Yet what we have been trying to do in our discussion about God is just the same. It is just as impossible for us to understand the mystery of God as it is for that child to put the water of the ocean into that hole. Our minds are but tiny thimbles, whereas the reality of God is as great as the ocean.’ The story must not be used to justify laziness or superficiality in our efforts to understand something of the mystery of God.”

Jesus came and began to speak about his Father and his Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of the Father. The Father and the Spirit are not realities invented by Christ, but rather the deepest realities of all that is which Jesus is now beginning to speak about with His followers. Jesus reveals reality to us and the relationships within reality.

Slowly Jesus reveals to us that God is a reality that is Triune and which reflects love within itself and outside itself. Most of the time we don’t spend much time reflecting on this reality because it is so far beyond our capacity to understand. On the other hand, this mystery of the Trinity, this mystery of Jesus, this mystery of the Father’s love—this is the deepest nature of our world and draws us all to learn to accept God’s love and forgiveness.

Dear sisters and brothers, we walked with Jesus through His life to His death and then came to know His Resurrection. All of these great mysteries point us to Father, Son and Spirit. The more we walk with Jesus and the more we are formed by Him, the more we can understand and delight in the Most Holy Trinity. Amen.

I would like to wish you and your family have a peaceful life and wonderful week.

Happy Feast Day, Trinity Sunday!

May Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you and your family always!

Fr Tao Pham