

Sunday, May 27, 2018

The Most Holy Trinity

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

2nd Reading: Romans 8:14-17

Responsorial: Psalm 33:4-6, 9, 18-20, 22

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Knowing and Experiencing More Deeply the Great Love and Mercy of the Trinity

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

Often enough, our thoughts about the Holy Trinity tend to focus on the question of logistics: how can there be one God in three Persons? We may think of St. Patrick's analogy of the shamrock with its three leaves to help us. But no single picture can possibly explain the complexity, the depth, and the beauty of our God.

Rather than a mathematical mystery to be solved, the Trinity is a spiritual mystery to be savored. It is God revealing himself to us and convincing us of his love and care for us.

Father. Revealing himself as our heavenly Father, God proved that he is not a distant, fickle, or vindictive god. He is a God for whom family is everything. Like a father, he wants to be close to you. He promises to care for you and look after you. He wants nothing but good for you. He has gone so far as to name you his heir!

Son. When God came to earth, he didn't come in power and majesty. Rather, he "emptied himself" and became one like us (Philippians 2:7). Many were expecting a Messiah who would lead Israel to military victory and political independence. But Jesus came as brother and friend. He established his kingdom, not by force, but by self-sacrificial love. His message of mercy is meant to melt our hearts, not make us cower in fear.

Holy Spirit. God didn't disappear when Jesus ascended to heaven. Quite the opposite: he became even closer. God dwells in your heart! He is always with you, always ready to pour out his love and to make you more like him. He is always with the Church, feeding us with word and sacrament. He is always in the world, forming us into one family in Christ.

This is the true mystery of the Trinity: that our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—loves us deeply and treats us with great tenderness and mercy.

"Holy God, we praise your name! Lord of all, we bow before you!"

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. In the first reading, Moses' reminds the people of Israel of the great works that God performed to rescue them from slavery in Egypt and to form them into his people: "Did anything so great ever happen before? Was it ever heard of?" He also reminds them that "so great" a work by God demands a response by the people: "This is why you must now acknowledge, 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." Of course, God has done an even greater work for us in rescuing us from slavery to sin and forming us into his people.
 - Why do you think the people of Israel struggled to stay faithful in their response to God's great love and mercy?
 - What has been your response to the incredible truth that God emptied himself and became man, suffered and died in our place, and sent his Spirit so that we could share in his very life?
2. The Responsorial Psalm also begins by describing the great works of the Lord: "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. ... 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." It ends with this response by the psalmist: "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."
 - What is your response to the uplifting words at the beginning of the psalm?
 - C.S. Lewis once said these words: "Put first things first and second things are thrown in. Put second things first and you lose both first and second things." What part of your life do you give to God, "who is our help and our shield" and our hope"? Is it the "first" or the "second" thing?
3. The second reading opens with these encouraging and hope-filled words: "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."
 - Because we are "children of God," we can call God "Abba," the Hebrew/Aramaic word for "daddy" or "papa," a term of love and childlike familiarity. Do you view God the Father as a loving and tender father or as a strict enforcer of his laws and commandments (like a cop in the sky)?
 - What steps can you take to change any false images you may have of your Heavenly Father?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus speaks these words, which are an expression of our faith in the triune God, in whose name we were each baptized: "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."
 - The Gospel includes Jesus "great commission" to the apostles to go and "make disciples of all nations." What part, as baptized Catholics, do you believe we are called to play in this great commission to the Church?
 - What do the last words of the Gospel reading mean to you: "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age"?
 - Have you ever reflected on the graces of God, received in the Sacrament of Baptism and through faith in Jesus Christ? In what ways should such reflections cause us to praise and adore God for showing us his mercy and giving us a share in his divine life? How can you make them a greater part of your daily times of prayer?
5. For Holy Trinity Sunday, the meditation describes attributes of each person of the Trinity in terms of their care, their love, and their mercy toward us. It ends with these words: "This is the true mystery of the Trinity: that our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—loves us deeply and treats us with great tenderness and mercy."
 - What has God been teaching you this Easter season about his great love for you?
 - What steps have you taken, or what additional steps can you take, to open yourself more to the great love of the Trinity -- and to develop a more personal relationship with the Father who loves you, the Son who redeemed you, and the Holy Spirit present within you in power and love?
6. Take some time now to pray, and to praise and thank the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for their sacrificial love and mercy. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Holy God, we praise your name! Lord of all, we bow before you!"

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org) and a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org). Maurice was also the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]