

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
May 27, 2018
Fr. Rick Lorenz

Reflection

There's a [video](#) on YouTube this week. It shows St. Patrick explaining the Trinity to a couple of Irishmen. He begins with a basic statement: there is one God in three persons: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They don't understand, so he tries different analogies. First he compares the Trinity to water, which can be ice, liquid or vapor. But this is a heresy called modalism: it's wrong because the persons of the Trinity are not three different forms of one nature, but three distinct persons. Then he compares the Trinity to the sun, which is a star with light and heat. But this is a heresy called Arianism: it's wrong because the Son and the Holy Spirit are not created, but are co-eternal with the Father. Next he compares the Trinity to a three-leaf clover. But this is a made-up heresy which they call Partialism: it's wrong because God cannot be divided or changed, he is one and simple. Finally St. Patrick gets fed up, and fires off part of the Athanasian Creed: "We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance; we are compelled by the Christian truth to confess that each distinct person is God and Lord; and that the deity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, equal in majesty." Their response is... "Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

Analogies try to make things simple. It would be convenient if our faith was easy to understand. That's why some Roman emperors and later kings pushed Arianism; the belief that God the Father created the Son and the Holy Spirit. This way all their subjects would be united in belief. But simplifying the faith leads us into error.

Dt 4:32-34, 39-40
Ps 33
Rom 8:14-17
Mt 28:16-20

The Trinity is a mystery, so we have to accept that we cannot fully understand God. We can conclude that he exists by looking around. Everything comes from somewhere; a source that isn't created, but just IS. But God chose to reveal himself to Moses, out of love. He is the creator, the father of Israel, and the giver of law and covenant (238). "Has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of?" The Old Testament reveals the Father plainly, and suggests the Son obscurely. He's mentioned in the psalm as the creating word. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. For he spoke and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm." The New Testament is where the Son is revealed plainly; true God and true man; righteousness, justice and love made flesh. Jesus proclaimed the Holy Spirit to his disciples in his final command: "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." But his proclamation wasn't made openly...it was said to his disciples. According to St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Trinity was revealed in stages by design: "It was not prudent...when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted, to add the Holy Spirit as an extra burden, to speak somewhat daringly...By advancing and progressing 'from glory to glory,' the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays (684)." Only at Pentecost was the Holy Spirit revealed (738), in whom the mission of the Church unfolds: to bring all "of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity (260)." This task is given to us, because "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons and daughters of God."

The Trinity dwells within us, giving new life and freedom as heirs, making us adopted children walking towards glory.

But still, the Trinity remains a mystery. I like to tell the children at the schools that not even the smartest people in the Church - not even the Pope - can fully understand God. Our minds are only this big, but God is infinite. We cannot confine him into our understanding, and this makes him worthy of our worship. We cannot know all, but we can know some. We can know that there is one God, and that God is three persons: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each is God; so each has the divine substance: the fullness of being and the power of love. This makes each one fully God: the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God: their substance gives them unity. So what makes them a Trinity? The Father is the source of divinity. The Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Their relationships make each one distinct: relationship makes God a Trinity. St. Gregory of Nazianzus wonders how to balance these realities: "I have not even begun to think of unity when the Trinity bathes me in its splendor. I have not even begun to think of the Trinity when unity grasps me (256)." We can know this doctrine, more or less, but even better, we can believe. We're strengthened by the Creed that we profess each week. God gives us the grace to say this prayer, and it sinks in over time. It increases our faith so that we can believe what we cannot see. Faith makes up for what we cannot know, and it far exceeds our limitations. According to St. John of the Cross, faith gives to the soul "all the wisdom of God, which is the Son of God, who communicates Himself to the soul in faith (AoMC, 2.29.6)."

The creed increases our faith, but so does the Eucharist that we receive. It is the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus; it is God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It makes us more and more his children, so that we can bring his divinity to the world.

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
and First Communion
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Reflection

Today I'm going to speak to the children sitting in the front row. The rest of you can listen if you like.

It's a very special day for you. You're going to receive First Communion. It's the body and blood of Jesus, the Son of God. Each time you receive him, you begin to be more and more like Jesus; less and less attached to sin; more and more what God wants you to be.

Not only that, but it's the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. Every year, we think about the fact that God is a Trinity. That means there is one God, but he is three persons. If somebody asks, "How many gods are there?" you say "One!" If somebody asks, "How many persons are in God?" you say "Three!"

We think about the Trinity once a year, but get a reminder every time we make the sign of the cross. Let's do it now. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." We just said the names of the three persons of the Trinity: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We asked them to be with us as we pray. We reminded ourselves and our neighbours that we love God, and that he is three persons who love us too.

You had to work hard to be here today, coming in on Saturdays, going to workshops, learning about God. But lots of other things had to happen before the school year even began. First, God created the universe; the heavens above and the earth below; all the plants and animals too; and the people in every country.

Then he showed himself to Moses in the burning bush. He freed the people of Israel from Egypt and gave them law. They knew the law but couldn't follow it because they were stuck in their sins. So God the Father sent his Son Jesus. He showed people the love of God, healing them, forgiving them, giving his life for them...and for us too because we're sinners as well. After Jesus went to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave the apostles power, so they could leave Israel and baptize people in other countries. They all became children of God, just like us. Parents had their children baptized, and their grandchildren, and so on for 2000 years, bringing us to this special day. The Holy Spirit gave the apostles power, and they passed it on to the bishops and priests. So the Holy Spirit is still at work in the Church, right here and now. He helps you to understand the truth, to believe it and speak it to others. He helps you to pray like Jesus prayed, and to love like God loves, so you can join him one day in heaven.

So we know that the Trinity is the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: one God in three persons. "How many gods are there?" "One!" "How many persons are in God?" "Three!" We know that, but it's still hard to understand. It's even hard for the smartest person in the Church to understand - even the Pope. That's because our minds are this big, but God is infinite. It's a mystery! We can know some things about God, but not everything. And the fact that he's more than we can understand...that means he can worship him as something greater. We can know some things about God, but not everything.

So we need faith; that gift from God that lets us believe what we cannot see. Faith is even stronger than understanding. With understanding, we might know something like math. If I say "2+2=" you say "4!" But faith gives us all the wisdom of God, which is the Son of God. We received our faith in baptism, but it needs to grow. So we profess our faith each week; the Nicene Creed, the Apostle's Creed. Our understanding and faith grow a little bit each time we say it.

The creed increases our faith, but so does the Eucharist that we receive. It is the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus; it is God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It makes us more and more his children, so that we can bring God to the world.