

## Homily for Trinity Sunday 2017

This is Trinity Sunday. As Catholic Christians, the Trinity is the Central Doctrine of our Faith. The word doctrine comes from the Greek word *Doxa*, which we would translate as glory. Christian Doctrines therefore declare the glory of God. Of all doctrines, the Trinity is the most glorious of all because it helps us to better understand who God is as revealed to us through the 73 Books of the Bible and understood by the Catholic Tradition that grew out of the Apostolic Period. The Catechism teaches us:

***“God freely wills to communicate the glory of his blessed life.”***

In other words, God wants us to understand the relationship that has existed from all eternity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Church’s understanding of the Trinity does not define God, but it truly reveals God. Other mysteries of our faith tell us what God has done in time (the creation, the Incarnation, the Resurrection), but the Trinity tells us who God is in eternity.

Tertullian, one of the theologians of the early church, explained the Trinity with this metaphor: God the Father he described as "a deep root, the Son as the shoot that breaks forth into the world, and the Holy Spirit as that which spreads beauty and fragrance."

Bishop Fulton Sheen, spoke of the nature of God as being one, like that of water. Water’s chemical symbol is H<sub>2</sub>O. That is its nature. Is it possible to have various relationships within that one nature, he asks? Yes it is. The nature of water can then appear as a liquid, steam or ice. The nature of all three is identical but their form is different. Just as in the sun there is substance, light and heat, yet only one sun.

Throughout the Biblical Story God shows us his nature. As we move from the Old Testament to the New the interplay between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is more fully revealed so that we can experience the roots of the Father’s love growing into the shoots of the Incarnation of the Son of God, resulting in the beauty of fragrance of the Holy Spirit.

So let’s ask: what is the nature of God?

In today’s reading from Exodus we hear God declare to Moses His name and thereby declares his nature.

***The LORD, the LORD,  
a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger,  
and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,  
7 keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation,***

Here is one of the clearest expressions of the nature of God. This is one of the most repeated expressions of God’s nature in the Old Testament.

What does it mean? First of all, let’s consider the name of God, “the Lord”. This is the name God revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush when he declared “I am who I am”. The Lord is therefore the one who is continually present to us as the verb “I am” declares. And what it is that Exodus

reveals to us about the nature of the Ever, Present God. He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, to the point that he keeps steadfast love to thousands of generations.

Now take this and know that in the New Testament we read that “God is love”. Love is not an attribute of God, it is His very nature.

Now when we think about love, what do people in love do? They communicate and make images of themselves.

See how this plays out in creation.

Think about plants They drop seeds, which then enter the earth, and then give rise to striking reproductions, making images of themselves.

Trees cover the country side, summer wild flowers adorn an alpine meadow. All bearing a like image of the other.

Think of the communication that exists between people. A man and woman fall in love, marry and then through conjugal love conceive and bear an image of themselves.

Think of the ways we human beings manage to communicate and make images of ourselves. Conversations, writings, public speaking, the use of the media, sharing ideas, we touch impress ourselves upon the minds and heart of others and thereby produce images of ourselves.

Take this even further to the foundations and building blocks of the physical world. Think of the communication that goes on between cells in a living organisms. Think of protons and electrons that make up the atom.

Now think of the planets and galaxies, how they are drawn together. The moon has been held in this orbit for eons, the earth rotates around the sun as we see this remarkable interconnectedness in all of creation

So where does all of this come from?

In the Creed we declare that we “believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth”. By saying this we affirm God is the ultimate cause of the being of things. Just as the creation he has made speaks of his steadfast love, even more because his nature is Love and he is a Trinity of Persons there is perfect communication between the Three in One.

When we have this understanding of the relationship between God and the Creation we can appreciate then that the entire physical world is a mirror of God’s manner of being.

So when we speak of Trinity as the inter relationship between persons this is not some fanciful counterintuitive doctrine.

Within the unity of God there is an imaging process. The Father from all eternity produces the perfect image of himself. This perfect image we call the Son. The mirroring process we see below in creation is an analogy of the image we see in God. While a mirror cannot produce a perfect image of me, for it is two dimensional and is only my reflection, the Father can produce

perfect image of himself. In the Son is the perfect image of the mind, will, power, simplicity love, and compassion of the Father. In the Son we see the incarnate expression of merciful steadfast nature of God that has been from eternity to eternity.

So much is this so that the Book of Hebrews says of Jesus:

***He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature.<sup>1</sup>***

Everything the Father is, so is the Son. This is why we say in the Creed that the Son is Consubstantial with the Father. He shares completely in the Father's being. All images here below are reflections to a degree. The Son is perfection of the Father. When they look at one another they fall in love. Think about how when you see something good and beautiful you love it and want to be united to it. The Father and the Son, who are utter perfection, each falls in love with the other.

Bishop Fulton Sheen said that the Father and Son from all eternity sigh their love for each other. This Holy Breath is the Holy Spirit.

So we see in the Trinity that God is a play of persons with the same nature – Love.

The Father giving rise to Son and Father and Son together giving rise to the Holy Spirit

The Trinity is therefore another way of saying “God is Love...” The Father is God the Lover, the Son is God the Beloved and the Holy Spirit is the shared love between them.

Bishop Robert Barron comments that this love that God is so white hot that it spills over into creation. All those echoes of communication and image making we were exploring earlier mirror this intense communication.

However because of sin this communication of love has been interrupted and has led to a breakdown of communication. What did God do to address the communication breakdown?

The answer is found in those famous words from St. John:

***For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.***

Here we see that the image of the Father is sent into the world so that we can in turn be restored to the kind of communion and communication that God wills for us. What is eternal life? It is to share in the very life of the Trinity which we will one day fully know when in Heaven. But right now, all around us there are reflections of the Trinitarian life. Those who discern these signs are discovering ever more life's meaning and purpose. Not only so, people who are sharing in the Life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit also want to work at their own relationships. This is why St. Paul ends his 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Corinthians by aligning our human relationships with the relationship of the Trinity:

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 1.3

***Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.***

Reconciliation in our human relationships is fundamental to the life of the Christian because we are to be image bearers of the Trinitarian God, who is Love.

I end my homily with the words that end 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians and are the words that are spoken as the Greeting of the Mass:

***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.***