

Trinity Sunday, Year A  
Exod 34:4b-6, 8-9  
Dan 3:52,53,54,55  
2Cor 13:11-13  
Jn 3:16-18

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In our liturgical calendar, the Sunday after Pentecost is observed as the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Trinity Sunday. The Church designates this Sunday as a time for reflecting more deeply on the mystery of the one God who has revealed the divine Self as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Right after the 11:30 Mass on Sunday I will have the privilege of baptizing three babies, Sophia, Avalon, and Vivian. I'm going to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. A practice has sprung up in some non-Catholic churches, that their ministers baptize in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier. I suppose they're trying to avoid the gender identification that's associated with Father and Son but the Catholic Church directs that we listen to the words of Jesus we heard two weeks ago, when we celebrated the feast of the Ascension. At the very end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus commissioned his apostles to make disciples of all nations, and to baptize all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

That should be enough authority for anybody, but there is another reason we shouldn't replace Father, Son, and Spirit with Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Each of those titles is beautiful and correct, but they tend to reduce the persons of the Trinity to their relationship to us, as if the focus should be on us. Trinity Sunday, however, is a time to turn our thoughts to the *inner* life of God – one divine nature, three divine persons.

In reciting the Creed, as we will in a few minutes, we call to mind the mighty works of God: we profess our belief in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, and in the only-begotten son our Lord Jesus Christ, and in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth. This profession of faith is the prelude to our response, which is worship and praise, honor and adoration.

God did indeed create us. In creating us God gave us two things: one, he entrusted us with a mission and, two, he promised us a destiny. The destiny is eternal happiness with God in heaven. The mission is to know God, love God, and serve God in this world, on this side of the grave.

God wants us to know the divine self. God is always and forever revealing the divine self. The problem is that God has no limits and we are utterly finite. All our knowledge, all our power, all our capacities are limited, but not so with God. God is infinite. In our first reading today, from the Book of Exodus, God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Moses could not take in the full experience of God; all he could do was bow down and worship. By the time St. Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he could affirm that the Church experienced a threeness in God that only later would be labeled Trinity: he signed off his letter with “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

The Gospels do not record that Jesus ever used the word Trinity. The word Trinity does not appear anywhere in Scripture. Only late in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, after the words of our Creed had been painstakingly hammered out, did the word Trinity get coined. A century later St. Augustine shared his thinking on the Trinity. He started from the revelation, in the first chapter of Genesis, that human being was created in the image of God. What puts us in the image of God is our intelligence (that is, our capacity to know and understand) and our will, by which we love and choose. So, God knows and God loves. But, leaving aside the created world, what is there for God to know? The answer is himself. And, God being perfect and complete and infinite, the self-knowledge of God is so utterly perfect as to give rise to a second person, whom we call the Son. And the love between Father and Son is so utterly perfect and complete as to give rise to the Holy Spirit. Now, our language permits us to express these operations only as if they occurred in temporal sequence, but of course God exists beyond time and so the sequence is not temporal but only logical.

So, the Father’s self-knowledge begets the Son and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the love of the Father and the Son for each other. That barely scratches below the surface of the mystery of the Trinity, but it is a step in growing in our mission to know, love, and serve God in this world. God is revealed as one: the oneness of God we call his nature. God is revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: the threeness of God we call persons. Three persons, one God. One God who lives and reigns as a dynamic community of love, a God who reaches out to each one of us. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.” God gave his son and he sent his son. So that we might have eternal life in him and that the world may be saved through him.

When God created us – each of us and all of us – God created us with a mission, to know, love, and serve God in this world, and a destiny, to be happy with God forever in the next world. Because of the pride and disobedience of our first parents, human nature got wounded and lost the capacity for happiness that Adam and Eve were created with. Jesus has restored that capacity for eternal happiness by his life and death and resurrection. And Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and renew the face of the earth.

The God who is love has revealed the divine Self, to us, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.