

I'd like for you to take a moment now and reflect on what the word "communion" means to you. How do you define it? What's the first image that the word brings to mind?

For many of us, especially in the context that we find ourselves in right now, our weekend/Sunday Mass, we probably think of communion as something that we are about to receive. The body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord, Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. And that thought is, of course, both valid and true.

But today, as we celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, I'd like to challenge you to think of the word "communion" in a broader sense. The word "communion" itself comes from the Latin – the last part of the word "union" mated with a Latin prefix meaning "with," gives us "in union with." So, yes, as we receive the Sacred host today we're certainly "in union with" our Lord and Savior.

Taking this meaning a step further, however, our Church Fathers, in their wisdom, have handed down to us teachings on other "communions" that we are called to foster in our lives. For example, there's our personal union with God and springing from that is our union with those individuals who journey with us in our lives.

With that being said, it's important for us to realize that we are expected to build this unity of ourselves with God and with others on a solid foundation – a foundation hewn from the example of the life of the unity of the Trinity – three separate and distinct persons in communion with one another – God our Father, in intimate union with his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Both Father and Son are mysteriously bound in union with one another with the unbreakable cords of love. This love of Father and Son is so strong and powerful that it becomes personified in the Holy Spirit.

So, this sometimes mysterious and seemingly difficult to understand being that we call our "Trinitarian God" is in truth quite simply a communion of three persons who cannot live one without the other two. And, in their inseparable unity, this "Threeness" of persons can only do one thing – and that is to express a selfless love for each other – a love so powerful that it spills over upon us.

Using this Trinitarian unity of love as our foundational model then, we can see how we are called to relationship – to relate to God and to relate to others.

In today's second reading, St. Paul confers on us a blessing as he did on the Corinthians two-thousand years ago as he cries out, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." So, being graced with the life of Jesus Christ and loved with the heart of our Father God, all in union with the Holy Spirit, we find that we have what it takes to then reciprocate and selflessly enter into "union with" God and with our neighbor.

Let's take a look at these "communions" we are called to. First, our invitation to relationship with God.

Just as we witness the "oneness" of God in the Trinity, we are likewise lovingly invited to be "one" with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are quite simply called to love God and to do so by building on the model of love that binds the Trinity. Yet, it's easy for us to lose sight of this noble calling and it can be difficult for us to always put this love into practice. Knowing this weakness, however, God gives us reminders – little sign posts along the road to help guide and direct us on our paths of life. One such sign, is something we do, or should do, each day – making the Sign of the Cross.

This simple gesture can become mindless and routine. But with its Trinitarian formula of words – “In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” this movement and prayer can actually serve, in a way, as a powerful recollection and renewal of our baptism. In this simple prayer, we are reminded that we are in fact in intimate communion with God above all things.

When we make the sign of the cross we immerse ourselves in the communion of the persons of the Trinity. And in doing so we make ourselves an offering and a prayer. In it we brand ourselves with God in three persons and whatever we say or do afterward is then said or done in union with the minds and hearts of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We touch our heads for the Father – the one who created us. This touch is a reminder not only of a Creator but of a divine person so totally in love with us that he formed us so that we might enjoy a complete and full union – a communion – with him.

We touch our hearts for the Son – the one who teaches us how to love through his own Sacred Heart. Jesus gave the ultimate and agonizing proof of His love for us on the cross. He once again gives us proof of his love today in the Eucharist that we are about to receive.

We touch our shoulders for the Holy Spirit – the one who gives us strength, on whose shoulders we are carried, and who enables us to be God's arms here on earth.

And we come to the end of this prayerful sign of our unity with our Triune God – by joining our hands and exclaiming, “amen,” “so be it.” Our “amen” becomes an expression of assent, in itself an act of faith. “I believe in you...my Father. I believe in you, Jesus, my Lord. I believe in you, Holy Spirit, my guide, advocate, consoler and enabler.”

Having the Trinity of Persons serving as a model of love, and our striving to be in right relationship with this God of ours, we are now prepared to take an even further step – to enter into the other “communion” we are called to – our communion with our family, friends and neighbors. But how are we in actuality to live in unity with one another?

We all know that this commandment can be difficult and challenging at times to carry out. But once again, God is good and in his goodness, he provides us with all the relational resources that we need. He provides the grace of the Sacraments that serves to strengthen our resolve to relate well to others. He also provides us with his word in the Scriptures – a sharing of his mind where he lovingly provides clear direction and help as we journey on the road of life with those around us. Our readings today are rich in examples of this providence.

In our first reading we join Moses on Mount Sinai where we hear God describing himself and some of his most notable virtues: God portrays himself as being merciful and gracious, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity. In setting this out, our triune God expects us to relate to others likewise.

St. Paul in our second reading urges us, that in our communion with one another, we are to mend our ways, to encourage and agree with one another, to live in peace as the Trinity does. The Apostle goes on to challenge us to greet *all* who we encounter with a holy kiss and in all of this – to rejoice!

And summing up our word from God on right living with him and others, we hear in St. John's Gospel today one of the most quoted lines in Scripture – we hear of the example that God sets for us – that he so loved the world that he gave to us what was dearest to himself, his only Son, so that through this giving we might have an eternal life of joy with him. We are thus called to do likewise, to live as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit does. To live selflessly for others.

Yes, at times the concept of a Threeness of persons in one being can seem complicated and difficult to understand. But, it doesn't have to be that way. Think of our definition of "communion" – "in union with." With their intimate actions as a model of relationship, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the most holy Trinity – invites us to be in communion with them and then to simply live as they live – lovingly.