

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY | YEAR A
Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Jn 3:16-18

04 JUN 2023

As we heard earlier, today is the Solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life.” It is called a mystery because it cannot be understood by reason alone. God reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and God has made it known to us. But because it is a mystery that means we have to go a little– to– a lot further to understand the Trinity more. We’ll go a little further today.

Think of going to a piano and playing the note C {♩}. Then play the note E {♩}. Then play the note G {♩}. Three different notes, three different names, three different sounds. Each one is an individual note with its own characteristics – its own tone that makes it identifiable to us. Now, think of playing the three notes together as a chord – which is called a C Major chord {♩♩♩}. What do we hear? {♩♩♩} We hear one sound, one entity that’s made up of the three individual notes that we played and heard before.

That is my very humble, inadequate attempt to illustrate the idea of the Holy Trinity to you – three Persons, one God. If you don’t think the piano thing was a good illustration, don’t worry about it, because there really is no good way to explain the Trinity. It is a mystery – literally! And yet, it’s a mystery that we continually proclaim in our liturgies and prayers, but for many of us, it’s become so automatic, I’m not sure we’re really focusing on the fact that we Catholic Christians are such a Trinitarian people!

Coming into Church today, I’m guessing many of you perhaps took some Holy Water on your finger and blessed yourself – “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – the Trinity! And notice, we don’t say “In the *names* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” We use the singular “name.” One God, three persons.

As we begin the Mass, again we make the Sign of the Cross... same Trinitarian formula. Then the priest greets us, saying, “The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” The Trinity. Then, after the Penitential Rite, we pray when we say or sing the Gloria... “For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.” The Trinity, again.

Continuing in the Mass, a little later on, we profess our faith in the Three Persons of the Trinity when we say – or more accurately, pray – the Nicene Creed together, which is heavy with reference to the Trinity. Think of that as we pray it soon. And we encounter references to the Trinity throughout the Mass, in more of the prayers, even up to the final blessing before the dismissal. We are continuously praying to and acknowledging the Holy Trinity, in the prayers of our liturgy, and even in our private prayer.

Those of us who pray the *Liturgy of the Hours*, which is not just for clergy or religious, but is properly called “the Prayer of the Church,” know that we end the recitation of the Psalms each time with what’s called the doxology, “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.” ~~ Again, the Trinity! And we do the same when we pray the rosary and include the doxology at the end of each mystery of the rosary.

But even with all this, we don’t really understand the Trinity – how it can really be. We have less difficulty embracing the idea of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as individual Persons, but when we put them together and talk about the Trinity, we have a real challenge. What would maybe help us, in one respect, is us trying not to limit God by what we perceive and by what we know and understand – because all of that is really so limited by our humanity. The Trinity is not only possible – because God can do whatever He wills – but it is true and real because He has revealed that Truth to us, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

St. Athanasius, a 4th century Church Father, said, “In the Church, one God is preached, one God who is above all things and through all things and in all things. God is above all things as Father, for he is principle and source; he is through all things through the Word [Jesus]; and he is in all things in the Holy Spirit.”

I gave the illustration of the three musical notes, then the chord, to talk about the Trinity. A professor of mine in graduate school, Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio gives us another perspective on this triune mystery. He says, “Trinitarian traces abound everywhere in creation. The atom is proton, neutron, and electron. Our experience of time is triune – past, present, and future. The family too” he says, “is a reflection of Trinitarian love – the love of husband and wife, distinct and very different persons, generates the child who is from them but is nonetheless distinct from them, indeed absolutely unique.”

All these examples are just ways for us to come closer to an understanding of the mystery of the Trinity. We know that we can’t understand it fully, but that doesn’t mean we just disregard what God has revealed to us. And God did reveal the Trinity to us.

In an article author Karl Keating wrote about the Trinity he said, “Like many, I used to think that the doctrine of the Trinity was one of those abstract, theoretical things talked about by scholars and by the theology students they were browbeating, but not by regular folks.” Later, he realized he was wrong. He said, “If you think about it, there is no more important Christian belief than the Trinity. The entirety of our religion relates us to God, sensibly enough, and the doctrine of the Trinity tells us about God’s own inner life.” And, he concludes, “What could be more central [to our faith]?”

Another author, Elizabeth Klein, wrote a book titled, *God: What Every Catholic Should Know*. I’ve only recently started reading the book, but it has four of the book’s 15 chapters specifically about the Holy Trinity. It’s not a long book, only 134 pages. I recommend the book for a very good, clear, and accessible reading on the topic of the Trinity, and more about our God.

Klein writes, “When we understand more of the Trinity, we understand more about the unity to which God calls his Church and the whole human race. We are to be one as the Father and Son are one, not to compete with one another, but to give our whole selves over to those to whom we are united.”

So, hear the notes, and then the chord, think of the atom, with the proton, neutron, and electron, and contemplate the mystery of time – past, present, and future. Then, think of the God, Who is Love, Who is Three Persons, Whom we know individually – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *One God.*

And trust that what God has revealed to us is true. *It couldn't be anything but true.*

