

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Year A

Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9

Dn 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56

II Cor 13:11-13

Jn 3:16-18

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This day, Christians are invited to contemplate a mystery. Not a whodunit, for we know His name; not a murder mystery, for He is the source of life; not a puzzle to which can be applied the brilliant mind of the detective and the tools of forensic science. This day, we are invited to contemplate a mystery as clear as the water that flows from our faucets and falls from the skies, as strong as the scent of cut grass and good barbecue, as real as the earth and concrete which bear our pilgrim steps. God is not alone. God is Trinity.

This is the mystery which brings us here, the mystery in which we proclaim that God became man but is still God, that God moves among us but is not held captive by this world. "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father," Jesus says to Philip - but how can this be, unless God is One and God is More? And so we call Him "Son." "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Jesus says to the apostles - but how can this be, unless God is One and God is More? And so we call Him "Spirit." How can God be here, inside our frail hearts and within these weak walls, and also be in every soul and tabernacle; every office, slum, and hospital; every raging sea and every silent springtime pool; every mother's womb and every father's hope; every land blighted by terror and every land blooming under the gift of new spring - how can God be here and there, all these places, now and always, unless God is One and God is More? And so we call Him "Trinity." We praise Him as the One-in-Three, the everlasting community, the endless sharing and receiving of life from which comes forth all things. If we think on this for just one moment, glimpse the slimmest crescent of this mystery which surrounds us at every breath, contemplate but briefly the countless signs that God is utterly in the world and completely above it, we must, like Moses, fall down and worship so gracious a God, the giver of all good gifts, the Lord and God of our fathers, "praiseworthy and exalted above all forever."

But there is more! Grace upon grace, mystery upon mystery, we also celebrate today the unimaginable, peerless gift of being made in God's image and likeness. God does not just create: He creates something like Himself. We are each created in the image of the Trinity. We are created such that in our bones and cells and hearts and brains we seek belonging and friendship. Each of us is one and each of us is more, and all of us long to bind our hearts to other people, to receive mercy and to share compassion, to find ourselves not in a tight fist and a calculating eye, but in commitment, duty, sacrifice, that part of ourselves which we give away and which is handed back to us by family, friends, strangers, brothers and sisters in Christ. We see it all right here, who we are, on this table, every week, as we give back to God what He has given us: the sacrifice of Christ. In our eating and drinking, our giving and receiving, we enter into communion with the Trinity - we, poor, fallen creatures, born weak and bloody and crying, destined for only a few short years, years which we zealously fill with sin for ourselves and sadness for others. In this Mass, at this table, we enter into the community of God: we join the Son and Spirit in singing praise to the Father, we join the Father and the Son in breathing forth the Spirit upon the world,

we join the Father and the Spirit in giving birth to Christ in the flesh. At this table, we are made strong, strong to give from the altar of our lives to others, and receive back from them the gift of our own true selves. At this table, we become like God.

Because of the image of God in us and the gift of God to us at this Mass, the hopelessly difficult idea of the Trinity, this symbol which the greatest minds of mankind have bowed before in awe and wonder, has a practical meaning for us, a hard meaning. God is One and God is More, God is Trinity - and so God hates loneliness. He made us in His image, fashioned us with tongues to speak and ears to hear and hands to offer and receive, destined us for eternal life with the communion of saints: how could God not despise loneliness? "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," that we might be lost no longer but reunited with Him and with one another: how could the Father, Son, and Spirit not be revolted by the loneliness that runs like poison through our homes, offices, and schools? The flow of words which leaves us informed but unconnected, the contact of bodies which yields up no spiritual bond, the torrent of information and entertainment and diversion at our fingertips which leave us filled but barren, knowing but unknown, experienced but unwise - how could the Trinity not despise our festivals of isolation, our lonesome jubilees? The dreary distance chosen and imposed, the failure of friends, the fractured neighborhoods, the silences that fall like a blade between husbands and wives, all the gifts ungiven, refused, ignored - how could these be anything but blasphemy to the God who is Trinity? The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit despise the stench of loneliness which rises up from nursing homes and hospitals, the clamor of loneliness which sits in the schoolyard and works at the computer, the ashen taste of loneliness in the addicted and the poor. The God who said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" - how could He not be nauseated by the sight of men and women surrounded by piles of pretty things and throngs of comforts and pleasures unimagined in other ages, yet alone, adrift, men and women made islands, diminished, uninvolved with one another?

And what false hopes we will cherish, and what sinful choices we will make, to escape our loneliness! How many troubles arise from the human heart cut off from the blood of friendship and the bone of shared sacrifice and joy? What terrible sadness can start with the words, "I do not want to be alone"?

If we believe that God is One and God is More, that God does not exist in solitude nor desire us to, then our mission is clear. A follower of Jesus Christ must despise loneliness. A follower of Jesus Christ must recognize loneliness as ungodly, an offense to the Trinity, a blasphemy among the people made in His image and likeness. A follower of Jesus Christ must seek out the lonely and minister to them as surely as he strives to serve the hungry and clothe the naked. This day, if you make a visit, write an e-mail, pick up a phone, share a meal, and so lessen the loneliness of one human being, you are following Jesus Christ, you are doing the work of God, you are acting like the Trinity.

Loneliness is disgusting, unnatural, inhuman. Because of Christ, we can see that nothing is more truly written in the book of this world than that God is One and God is More. The Eucharist is God's revelation and His pledge: "I am not alone, nor are you." And because of this bread and wine, everything we touch and smell and taste and feel is a comfort, a sign that God is here with us, as we must be with one another. We can never be truly human if we are lonely, and we can never be truly Christian if we allow others to be. "Brothers and sisters, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another," care for one another, look around you today and find that man or woman whose heart contracts and whose soul shrivels under the dry, lifeless fury of this lonely day, "and the God of love and peace will be with you."