

# SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

## St. John 3:16-18

When my father was a boy he said the best homily he ever heard was a homily given on Trinity Sunday. He said the Priest stood to give his homily and said, "The Trinity is a mystery," and then sat down. My father said it was the best homily he had ever heard. Well, you're not so lucky this Trinity Sunday. I'm not sitting down just yet. But the reason my father said it was the best homily he had ever heard was not because it was short, but because in those few words the Priest captured something that made my father realise the immensity of the Holy Trinity and of our faith. That is, that the Holy Trinity is a mystery.

Now a mystery doesn't mean something that is insolvable, it means something that is revealed to us by God and which proclaims a truth of faith which we could never understand by reason alone. A mystery is something that opens up to us the grandeur of God. It is not that God wants us to not solve mysteries such as the Holy Trinity but, rather, in delving into the depth of the mystery we draw ourselves closer to the majesty of God.

There is a story of St. Augustine of Hippo, who lived in North Africa in the fifth-century, who, walking along the beach found a small boy who had dug a hole in the sand and was using a spoon to fill the hole with water he carried in from the sea. St. Augustine asked the boy what he was doing. The boy said that he was going to take all the water out of the sea and pour it into the hole he had dug. St. Augustine replied that such a thing as trying to fit the whole of the sea into this small hole would be impossible. The boy looked at him and said that he stood a better chance of taking all of the sea and pouring it into that small hole than St. Augustine did of ever understanding the immensity of the

Holy Trinity with his small brain. The child then vanished and St. Augustine knew then that he had been speaking with an angel.

If we want to understand what we believe about the Holy Trinity, think of the Creed we pray every Sunday at Mass and which we will pray soon. The Holy Trinity so permeates our profession of faith, our creed, that it becomes a way to profess almost everything we believe in faith. We begin our prayers “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” we are baptised “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” we have our sins absolved “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” we are blessed and have our homes and cars and other things blessed “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

There have been many great theologians throughout history that have sought to explain the Holy Trinity, including St. Augustine. What is important for us to understand is that the Holy Trinity is a community; the community of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and if only one of those persons was missing there would be no God. God the Father sent God the Son, who became flesh in Our Lord Jesus Christ and took on our human nature. Our Lord so loved His Father that He wanted God the Father to be loved by us, and He wanted us to be loved by His Father. So Our Lord allowed Himself to be crucified so that His pure sinless blood would be shed on a cross so that we can become the adopted sons and daughters of God. This love between the God the Father and God the Son is God the Holy Spirit, and it is the Holy Spirit that is within us and calls us back to God. We are caught up in the love of God, that is the Holy Spirit, and we share in the life of Christ, that is the Son, and we are carried back home to the Father.

One way I try to explain the Holy Trinity to students is by using an analogy of thinking, speaking and doing. The problem is that all analogies ultimately fail because none can encapsulate the immensity of the mystery, but we use them anyway to try to have some sort of understanding. I tell them to think of a pencil

lying on the floor. I will think, "I will pick up that pencil." I will say, "I will pick up that pencil." And then I do pick up the pencil. Each of those three things—thinking, speaking and doing—are all from the same me, but they are distinct expressions of me; one is thought, one is speech, and one is action. In this way we can try to understand the Trinity and that the three persons of God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are, in some way, an expression of the same God. We do call the second person of the Holy Trinity—Jesus Christ—the Word of God, and we do associate the third person of the Holy Trinity—the Holy Spirit—as the animator of the Church's faith.

Whilst it is common to associate the Father with creation, the Son with salvation, and the Holy Spirit with sanctification or holiness. But the fact is that each shares in the work or the mission of the others. So it is not just the Father who is involved in creation but the Son and the Holy Spirit as well, and the same for salvation and sanctification. God, so desiring that we should live with Him also seeks our involvement in His work, or mission, so that you and I also participate in the work of creation, salvation and sanctification. Because of our baptism we are drawn into the life of the Holy Trinity and we are expected to participate in that life. Not because God needs us but because God wants us.