

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Fr. Justin McNamara

Cistercian Abbey

June 11, 2017

Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Jn 3:16-18

A mystery by definition is incomprehensible. It demands that we stand in awe before it. To be sure, effort *can* be made to know it and draw ever closer to it in relationship with it; for you must have at least some knowledge of it before you can acknowledge its mystery. Yet in the end, again, we're compelled, whether in fear or in attraction, to lift our hands over our mouth and to utter no more. There is a well-known story about the great theologian, St. Augustine. One day, as he walked along the beach pondering the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, he noticed a young boy sitting at the edge of the sea. Over and over, the boy scooped water with a seashell and poured it into a hole in the sand. Curious, the saint asked the boy what he was doing, and he replied, "I'm emptying the ocean into this hole." Amused, Augustine told the boy that what he was attempting was impossible. The boy looked up at him and said, "It's no *more* impossible than your attempt to understand the Trinity." At this, the boy vanished and the saint realized that he'd been talking to an angel. You see as soon as we allow our gaze to be dazzled by the three divine Persons and their relations to one another, we're at once made dizzy with joy and perplexity at the simple unity of the Godhead. One in Three *and* Three in One!

Therefore, let's look at this immense mystery through a few meditations in the context of the short and familiar prayer of the 'Glory be', specifically in its concluding three-fold sequence of time. Firstly, then, *as it was in the beginning*... Through a simple thought exercise, try to imagine the existence of nothing at all but God alone. There's no heaven, no earth, no universe, not even space or time, all of those elements that make up our everyday experience and form our relationships to one another; nor are there angels. Just God alone. The wonder it should evoke

grows in intensity the more you consider it. Well, who created God? That's a nonsensical question. He just is. We, on the other hand, are trapped, as it were, in the limits of time and space, and so literally cannot conceive of such an existence. And yet God was from all eternity a perfect loving Communion of three Persons. The Father brought forth the Son, a perfect Image of Himself, and no less God than the Father, this we call generation; then together their Love is so intense that a third Person, the Holy Spirit, is, we say, spirated or breathed forth. This dynamism of complete Life and Love was present from all eternity. A faint analogy given us by St. Thomas Aquinas is when our mind (the source) conceives of a thought (an individual idea) and it is then willfully brought forth into audible speech. Or even more concretely, a husband and wife's love and intimacy is so selfless and pure, that a third person, a child, is brought forth. To an infinitely greater degree, the Holy Trinity is pure Light, Truth, Goodness, Beauty and a communion of Love and this is what was in the beginning.

Is now... This mysterious God, living in the eternal Present, willed to express his Love definitively through creation, covenant, and Cross. Out of nothing He fashioned an invisible world full of spiritual creatures and the universe we now enjoy, simply because He is immutably Good and Generous with His Life. This Generosity extended not only to our fathers in faith, the Israelites, as it happened through the covenant given to His servant Moses on Mount Sinai; but had culminated in the covenant of Christ. The eternal and Only-Begotten Son of the Father assumed our humanity to save us from our wayward and sinful selves. For God so loved his creation that He did not even withhold His Son, so that we might share His Life forever. And this sacrifice was perfected on the Cross when He emptied Himself of the last drop of His Precious Blood and His Body lay exhausted and lifeless on the tree. God's inexhaustible Love and tender care for us would

not allow sin and death to obstruct His Will, and so He raised Jesus from the dead, and placed Him at His right hand on the throne of His Glory.

God's Fidelity is unmatched and his Love is so steadfast that He willed that we not be left orphans here in this valley of tears. The very same Spirit of the Father and the Son has been given to us in baptism, making us the Father's adopted children. By virtue of our baptism each one of us, if we have not consciously severed that friendship with God, has become a living temple of the Holy Trinity. We're *fully* equipped to become another Christ, offering everything we are and have been given, all that we suffer and experience, as a perfect sacrifice to our Father in the Eucharist through Christ and in the Spirit. We *truly* have access to the mind of Christ, we read the Scriptures with the *same* Spirit that inspired them, and we're guided by the Holy Spirit through His ministers and members of the One Body of Christ, the Church. Everything's provided for us, there's absolutely nothing lacking to us for our growth in sanctity; but our stubborn wills and our darkened minds hinder us. Concupiscence weighs us down and makes us sluggish or yielding from time to time. And we don't reach out for help to heal us, and to grow in ever deeper union with the Blessed Trinity. We starve ourselves spiritually and we postpone the conversion we really need.

Recently I read a book with the following true story which illustrates well this point. "Some time ago a man was found dead in the California desert. After an investigation the authorities determined that his car had broken down and that he had walked for miles but never made it to shelter from the heat. The incredibly sad irony is that he died just a few yards away from an aqueduct. Amazingly, he had walked for some distance on a parallel course with the abundant flow of fresh water. At first this seemed strange to the investigators, but they soon recognized that he had no way of knowing that the water was there because from where he stood, the dull amorphous terrain hid the life sustaining water and because of the smooth concrete he would not have been

able to hear it. So, he died just a short distance from all the water he would have ever needed to survive.”

Friends, the Holy Trinity *is* that aqueduct that is constantly flowing alongside us, in our midst, eagerly awaiting to fill our fragile vessels with his Life and Love. But the Spirit is gentle, patient and ever respectful of our freedom. *We need* to be ready to change, to shake ourselves out of the slumber of spiritual sleep, to eradicate sinful habits or patterns of behavior, and invite God to fashion us into his new creation. God was, is and always will be perfect and in need of nothing. We, however, are imperfect and unfinished, unknowingly awaiting our truest fulfillment, wherever that can come from. The good news is that the Holy Trinity is *ours* for the taking and He is already inside us and living in the people around us. Allow His Will to be done in you. Believe in Him, trust Him and ardently pursue this Mystery which is ours now and, God willing, *will be forever!*