

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Solemnity of Most Holy Trinity—Year B

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Reading 1

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

Moses said to the people:

"Ask now of the days of old, before your time,
ever since God created man upon the earth;

ask from one end of the sky to the other:

Did anything so great ever happen before?

Was it ever heard of?

Did a people ever hear the voice of God
speaking from the midst of fire, as you did, and live?

Or did any god venture to go and take a nation for himself
from the midst of another nation,

by testings, by signs and wonders, by war,

with strong hand and outstretched arm, and by great terrors,

all of which the LORD, your God,

did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

This is why you must now know,

and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God

in the heavens above and on earth below,

and that there is no other.

You must keep his statutes and commandments that I enjoin on you today,

that you and your children after you may prosper,

and that you may have long life on the land

which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever."

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22

R. (12b) **Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

Upright is the word of the LORD,

and all his works are trustworthy.

He loves justice and right;

of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full.

R. **Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made;

by the breath of his mouth all their host.

For he spoke, and it was made;

he commanded, and it stood forth.

R. **Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,
To deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.
R. Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.
R. Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Reading 2

Romans 8:14-17

Brothers and sisters:
For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you received a Spirit of adoption,
through whom we cry, "Abba, Father!"
The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit
that we are children of God,
and if children, then heirs,
heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,
if only we suffer with him
so that we may also be glorified with him.

Alleluia

Revelation 1:8

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
to God who is, who was, and who is to come.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee,
to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them.
When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.
Then Jesus approached and said to them,
"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

Exegesis:

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

The *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* in their outline of the *Book of Deuteronomy* entitle Chapter 4:32-40 *The Unique Vocation of Israel*. God chose to create man, God chose to reveal Himself to a particular people, and God chose to save that nation from slavery in Egypt. The chosen people in response must come to know that God is Lord alone, must learn to know and keep His statutes and commandments and pass them on to their children and their children's children. They must learn to live in right relationship with God and with each other, i.e. living out His statutes and commandments. The focus is on the relationship of this particular people chosen by God and the relationship of this people with each other, i.e. their community. This is the bond of love exemplified by the trinity of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, as the love within God cannot be contained, but bursts out into all of creation, so the Israelite People are being chosen to mediate God's love to the entire world, i.e. the unique vocation of Israel.

Psalm 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22

Psalm 33 is a hymn celebrating our Creator God, our Savior God, and our Loving God. The Trinity is praised throughout, most directly in verse 6: "By the Lord's (Father) Word (Son) the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth (*Ruah* - Holy Spirit) all their host." Psalm 33 begins with rejoicing, praise, and thanksgiving for our Creator, Savior, and Loving God (Ps 33:1-2). God has chosen this particular people to be His very own, to be in relationship with Him.

Romans 8:14-17

Paul reflects on the sonship of believers in Christ. Though Christ is the eternal Son of God by nature, we share in His life and become adopted sons of God by grace. This takes effect through the Spirit, who is poured into our hearts (5:5) and shows us the way to the Father (8:15). Paul's discussion on sonship and suffering parallels with the Exodus story. The **sonship** of believers (8:15) recalls the sonship of Israel (9:4; Ex 4:22; Is 63:8). Calling God our father (8:15) echoes the title first given to Yahweh at the end of the Exodus journey (Deut 32:6; Is 63:16). Being led by the Spirit out of the bondage of Egypt by the pillar of fire (Ex 6:6; 13:21), which biblical tradition sees as an image of the Spirit (Is 63:10-14). Even the **groan** of the believer, still awaiting the fullness of **redemption** (8:23) reminds us of Israel groaning in bondage (Ex 2:23-24; 6:5) for the Lord's redemption (Ex 6:6; 15:13).¹

Our kinship with God comes through Jesus. As Jesus taught us to pray what we have come to call *The Our Father*, he is inviting us into the family of the Trinity by adoption, allowing us to call out to **our** Father, i.e. Abba. Abba in an endearing Aramaic/Hebrew word that a child might call his/her father or grandfather.

1. The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, The New Testament. Ignatius Press, S.F., page 267, F.N. 8:14.

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 28:16-20

Our Gospel passage today is the ending of Matthew's Gospel and is often entitled *The Great Commission*. It includes the last words of the Risen Lord in the Gospel of Matthew. As with most of the captured words of the Risen Lord, they are words of action and commissioning, the passing of the torch. It can be broken down into three sections, past, present, and future. "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (past tense), "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (present tense), and "I am with you always until the end of the age" (future tense).

The eleven, the 12 apostles minus Judas, go to the place where the Risen Lord directed them. When they saw the Risen Lord, some worshiped and some doubted. The word that we translate as *doubted* is *distazo*, which can be translated also as *hesitated*. In any event it shows the humanness of the apostles. They did him homage which was the appropriate response in the presence of God.

It is interesting to note that the Risen Lord approached them. Again, He is choosing them to continue their role his disciples and to make disciples of all nations.

"All power in heaven and earth has been given to me." With this claim the Risen Jesus accepts what is said about the "one like the Son of Man" in Dan 7:14:² "And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him..." Once again as in the conversion of St. Paul, i.e. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" the Risen Lord makes no distinction between Himself and Mystical Body the Church. "All power has been given to Me. (You) go and make disciples..." As in the Gospel of John the Risen Lord is passing the power to his disciples, i.e., "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you."

A disciple is a student, a learner, a follower. The Risen Lord is asking His disciples to take over His role as teacher. In His footsteps they are to gather disciples to themselves to communicate the faith to future disciples who then too will become teachers of the faith.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God can be known by natural law. Man can posit God from what God has created. Man can know God by the inner workings of his own mind, heart, and soul. God as Trinity, three distinct persons in one nature, is a revealed Truth. Jesus spoke of and to the Father and He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. The totality of Sacred Scripture reveals to us a triune God. Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the revelation of the mystery that we have come to call the Trinity.

As the Risen Lord departs their sight His final words are a promise, "And behold I am with you until the end of the age." His promise fulfills the promise of the prophet at His birth "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." (Mt 1:23) Although Matthew does not specifically mention the promised Holy Spirit as John does it is implied in the presence of Christ. St. Paul points out that it is the Spirit of the Risen Christ that lives in us: "If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you. The one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through His Spirit that dwells in you." (Rom 8:11) Note that Paul includes the entire trinity of God when referring to this indwelling presence, i.e., the Spirit of the One (Father) who raised Jesus from the dead, His (Son's) Spirit (Holy Spirit). God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is present to us in infinite ways, in His Word and in the Sacraments of His Church. He is most real and substantial in the gift of the Holy Eucharist. Where Jesus is there is the Father and the Holy Spirit. As we approach the Altar this weekend invite people to enter into community of the Holy Trinity of love.

Reflection

This weekend we celebrate the great feast of the Most Holy Trinity. The fact that God is one in being yet three distinct persons is one of the central mysteries of our faith. Jesus reveals God to us as a Trinity of three persons. His parting words at the ascension are: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” (Mt 28:19) Jesus reveals to us who God is. He reveals Himself as the Son, and talks of and to the Father, and He promises us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In his great dissertation on the Holy Trinity, St. Augustine starts in the Old Testament. In the beginning God reveals Himself in the plural as He says, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” (Gen 1:26). Then St. Augustine turns to the various names for God in the Hebrew Scripture. Yahweh is the unspeakable name. The name itself speaks of all powerful, transcendent, creator God, the God who created the entire universe from nothing. Another name for God that is prevalent in the Old Testament is Elohim. Elohim speaks of God who is with the people, the God who pitched His tent and was with them on the journey. The third name for God that appears is Ruah, or life breath, or Spirit. In the story of creation, the mighty wind hovered over the waters. God takes the clay of the earth and breathes His life breath into it and man becomes a living human being. God reveals Himself as the all powerful and transcendent Father, as the ever present immanent Son, and as life breath or Spirit. Therefore, God is one, yet three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

St. John reveals God as Love. Love requires relationship by its very nature. The Holy Spirit is the bond of love that makes the Father and Son one. Because love is self-giving by its nature it must be shared. The Holy Spirit is the sharing of God’s life. It is the life that was breathed into humanity at creation. It is the life that is the ground of our being. It is the life that God wants to share with us eternally. It is life and love that is given to us in a very personal way through the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Love requires and seeks a personal relationship. Within God is this personal relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed, “Father may they be one as You and I are One.” Love seeks union and God therefore seeks union with each one of us. God’s love requires a very personal response from each one of us. Some of our protestant brethren speak often of the necessity of taking Jesus as our “personal Lord and Savior.” As you approach the altar to receive Communion, I remind you that when you receive Jesus as He gives His life to us in the most Holy Eucharist, it does not get any more personal than that! Where Jesus is there are the Father and the Holy Spirit. They are one. If you come with an open heart, if you give yourself to God as He gives Himself to you, you will enter union with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As we come together to the source of all that is we enter a common union with all of creation in union with the source of all that is and all that ever will be. Ultimately it is called Eternal Life.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love.
Amen.

Yours in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,



Personal Witness

Several years ago, in one of my parish assignments I was involved in prison ministry. I had the privilege of meeting a young man in his early thirties who was totally on fire for the Lord. At the time I met him he was leading a bible study group with fellow inmates. He joined our prison R.C.I.A program and was initiated into the Catholic Church. In the following years he headed up our prison R.C.I.A group and helped to lead many souls to the Lord.

Derik (not his real name) was doing an extended prison term for murder. As a teen he was tried as an adult and pleaded guilty to first degree murder. He openly shared his story with everyone who would listen. He grew up in the inner city without ever knowing his father. He had one older stepbrother who also did not know a father. His mother was an addict and was seldom present. His older brother was involved in a gang that trafficked drugs in a specific territory of the inner city. At the age of fourteen Derik begged his brother to allow him to join the gang. Derik entered the gang a month later and he said that he finally felt that he belonged. It gave him a sense of family for the first time. He had brothers that cared and looked out for him. He had a job and a sense of purpose. He had enough money to care for himself. His job was to peddle drugs to the younger children in the area.

One summer a rival gang began to infringe on their territory and a war broke out. Derik's older brother was killed in the process. Derik in a rage of anger and revenge shot and killed a member of the rival gang. He was only 16 and the boy that he shot was only 17, a person that he did not even know. And now he was in prison serving extended time for his crime.

On the night that I first heard Derik's story I laid awake thinking of the young man and his circumstances. I remember wondering, what if I were born into his situation? Would I be in prison? I grew up in a strikingly different environment. I grew up in a rural area near a small town. I grew up in strong Catholic family of six children with a good hardworking father and a stay-at-home mother. I was surrounded by a large extended family with dozens of cousins, with both sets of grandparents close to the family. I was involved in various 4H groups, several youth sports teams, numerous elementary extra-curricular activities, etc. I was heavily involved in my Catholic faith and belonged to a very vibrant parish community. I worked on the farm and had my chores to do daily. As a child, in my childlike mind, I had too much belonging!

God is a community of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are created in God's image and likeness. We are created out of love and for love. We are created for relationship. The need to belong, the need for community, is a part of our created nature. One of the deepest longings of the human heart is to belong. Conversely, one of the deepest fears of the human heart is isolation.

One of the anxieties, and there are many, of young people that I recently heard of is being termed, FOBLO, i.e., fear of being left out. As society turns away from personal interaction and more towards screens, we are feeling more and more isolated. In isolation the need to belong intensifies.

The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity is a celebration of community. By our baptism we are invited to enter the Trinity of God, the Communion of love with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus formed a community around Himself that we call the Church. Just as the Holy Spirit cannot be contained, but bursts out into all of creation, so too are we called to bring God's love into our families, into our communities and to the ends of the earth. It is to this end that we are chosen and empowered. It is to this mission and this community that we are called to belong.

May God bless you and your loved ones in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

