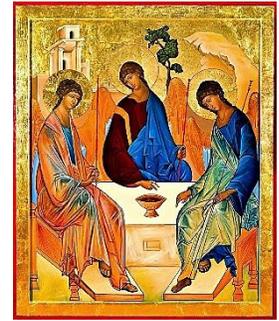


# Our Lady of the Airways Parish

The Most Holy Trinity, 2020



Dear Friends in Christ,

*“Blessed be God the Father, and the Only Begotten Son of God,  
and also the Holy Spirit, for he has shown us his merciful love  
(Entrance Antiphon of the Mass).*

On the wall in front of my office desk hangs the famous icon titled, *The Trinity* (see image above). This 15<sup>th</sup> century icon by the Russian painter, Andrei Rublev, depicts the Old Testament story of the three angels, who visited the patriarch Abraham at the Oak of Mamre (see Gen. 18:1-18). Over the centuries, the consensus among scholars is that the image is an icon of the Holy Trinity, “one God in three persons.” The left angel, who is blessing the cup, symbolizes God the Father. The middle angel, who blesses and accepts the cup set on the table, represents Jesus Christ. While the third angel, with a mountain drawn behind it, is believed to be the Holy Spirit. The three angels who are seated in a circle, each manifest certain gestures, which suggests that they are in a silent, sublime communion with one another. With this image in mind, let us now reflect on today’s readings for the solemnity of the Holy Trinity and consider what this mystery means for us.

The Church teaches that the Trinity is *the* central mystery of our Christian faith and life. The Catechism writes, “[*The Trinity*] is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the ‘hierarchy of the truths of faith’” (234). The other mysteries that we profess (e.g., the death and Resurrection of Jesus, and the Eucharist) shows what God has done/continues to do for us. The mystery of the Trinity, however, tells us *who* God is. The Catechism further states, “*The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons: [Father, Son and Holy Spirit]... The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God, whole and entire*” (253). Thus, the Trinity is really a mystery about God in himself, that is, one God, three Persons.

If we are to understand the teaching of the Trinity, perhaps it would be helpful to make some distinctions between two key terms: *being and person*. A *being* is a unified substance that exists; thus, it is anything that is real (e.g., a statue, a dog, a human, or an angel). A *person*, however, is someone who has the capacity to say “I”; in other words, an individual self. In each *human* being, there is only one person, one “I”. In each *angelic* being, there is only one person, one “I”. Not every being, however, has to have a person. Although a statue is a being, it has no persons. Although a dog is also a being, it too has no persons. Both the statue and the dog are just two examples of beings that have zero persons, no “I”, but there are undoubtedly countless other examples. In the case of the Holy Trinity, the number of persons is neither zero, nor one, but three. For in the Creed, we profess God as one Being, and in this one divine Being, there exists three “I,” or three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), each who is fully God. While these explanations have undoubtedly been oversimplified, nevertheless, we can start to understand the Trinity’s unique reality - *One Being, three Persons* - if we recognize that not every being is exactly one person.

The teaching of the Trinity is referred or alluded to (either indirectly or directly) in both the Old and New Testaments. Today’s first reading, for example, makes two such mentions. The Exodus reading comes from the famous story of the Lord appearing to Moses on Mount Sinai after he had just destroyed the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. The text reads, “*The Lord descended in the clouds and stood with [Moses] there, and proclaimed ‘The Lord.’*” The cloud mentioned here symbolizes the Holy Spirit of God. While the English word, “Lord”, refers to the sacred divine name YHWH, or what is referred to as the *tetragrammaton*, the personal name of the God of Israel.

A more explicit Trinitarian reference is found in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Paul, who is monotheist (a person who believes in a single, all-powerful God), concludes his letter to the Corinth community by saying, *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."* Many people will immediately recognize these words, since they are one of the three greetings that priests are permitted to use in welcoming the faithful at the start of the Mass.

The final Trinitarian reference is found in today's gospel and it comes directly from the mouth of Christ. St. John the Evangelist writes: *"Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.'"* By saying that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, John is acknowledging the fact that Jesus pre-existed time, that is, He has no beginning and is therefore the eternal Son of God.

The Trinity isn't just a mystery that is to be understood or professed by us. Rather the Trinity is the perfect example by which we can model our lives after. If we have been made in the image and likeness of God, then we ought to experience something of the mystery of the Trinity within our own lives. If God exists in a communion of three Persons, each who directs love towards one another and receives love from one another, then we too must adjust our lives to mirror the example set by the Trinity.

One of the greatest lesson that many of us have learned during this pandemic is the importance of belonging and the need for community. For many weeks now, we have been forced to social distance ourselves from our families, friends, coworkers and members of our church. These long periods of separation have exposed and magnified our inherent need for human interaction and relationship. The sad truth is that many people within our society have also longed for the same thing (even before the arrival of the coronavirus) and have had little success in experiencing it. Hopefully, our personal and painful experiences will remain imprinted within our human psyche and impel us to always seek and interact with the countless less fortunate people within our communities: those who have been forgotten, neglected, ostracized and abandoned.

Let us never forget that though we are individual; we are social. Though we are one; we are linked together. Though we can live by ourselves; we cannot survive or exist without others. Though we are many; we are ultimately one. Today's mystery of the Trinity is a powerful reminder that just as God is made up of a communion of Persons, we too belong to a communion of persons.

Let us pray....

*"Glory be to the Father, Who by his almighty power and love created me,  
making me in the image and likeness of God.*

*Glory be to the Son, Who by His Precious Blood delivered me from hell,  
and opened for me the gates of heaven.*

*Glory be to the Holy Spirit, Who has sanctified me in sacrament of Baptism,  
and continues to sanctify me by the graces I receive daily from His bounty.*

*Glory be to the Three adorable Persons of the Holy Trinity now and forever. Amen."*

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Thomas Lim