

Solemnity of the Holy Trinity

You hear me begin each Mass with the greeting: "The grace and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." We praise the God who has revealed Himself as a Trinity, a communion of persons.

Communion with the Trinity is the goal of our worship. But do we really understand what the Trinity is all about?

Of course no one can completely understand the Trinity — it is the great, central mystery of our Faith as Christians. However, we can have some understanding of the nature of the Trinity, and the place to begin our understanding of the Trinity comes from a famous quote from the First Letter of St. John when he writes, "God is Love!" (1 John 4:8).

This is a Scripture quote that all of us have heard so often. In fact, Pope Benedict entitled his first encyclical "God is Love!" Unfortunately, we may have become so used to this quote that we do not remember how revolutionary and unique that conception of God really is.

There are many religions in the world, and many of them have come to understand that God is good. However, almost all of them start with our search for God. Because human nature is limited, however, that search can only arrive to a limited view of God.

Christianity is different. Christianity is about God's search for us. When Jesus Christ came to earth, He came in order to rescue the fallen human race from evil and bring it to the joys of eternal life. And so, in Christianity, we have the privilege of receiving God's own revelation of Himself – He actually shows us, in Christ, who He is and what He is like. And His most fundamental and essential characteristic is love. Not power, not knowledge, not transcendence – but love.

This explains why Jesus came to earth in the first place: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16). And this also explains what the Holy Trinity is all about.

If God were solitary, how could His nature be love? Love always means relationship and self-giving. God can only be love if He is both one and three: three divine persons, each one fully divine, living from all eternity in an unbreakable unity of mutual love. God is love. In other words, God is one, as the Catechism puts it, but not solitary (CCC 254).

The Catechism teaches us that "The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life" (CCC 234). This is because we are created in the image and likeness of God, as the Bible tells us. Therefore, if God's essential nature is love, so is ours! We have a built in openness to other people. We are incomplete by ourselves. We are created to give ourselves to others and to receive others.

This is the real meaning behind human sexuality – the theological meaning of our

bodies. God created us male and female. When a husband and wife come together in marriage, they become one flesh; they give themselves to each other completely, holding nothing back.

This is an image of the love of the Holy Trinity. The Father, from all Eternity, loves the Son and pours himself into the Son, and the Son loves the Father in return. And that mutual love is so complete that the Holy Spirit proceeds from it.

Every human family is an image of this Trinitarian love. The husband gives himself without limits to the wife, and the wife receives him and gives herself in return, without limits. And it is through that total love of mutual self-giving that God brings a new life into the world: a child, called to eternal friendship with God.

This is the true sacredness and beauty of married love, of sexual love. This is why the Church never wavers in issues of sexual morality: human sexuality has a deep theological meaning that we must all honor if we are to live life to the full. Any time we separate sexual love from that meaning, we not only abuse our very selves, but we also rebel against God, who has created us in his image: the image of self-forgetful love.

This mysterious and wonderful doctrine about God, that he is both unity and trinity, as we said before is "the central mystery of Christian faith and life". It is the center of our faith, because it gives us a glimpse into the inner life of God Himself, the God we believe in. And it's the center of our life, because we are called to be living images of God, created to love and be loved.

Jesus gave his Church the great commandment to "love one another as I have loved you." He did not command us to make millions of dollars. He did not command us to win awards and prizes in our profession. He did not command us to be comfortable. He commanded us to be like him: to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And loving God leads automatically to loving our neighbor.

As Pope Benedict wrote in his first encyclical: "In the saints one thing becomes clear: those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them" (Deus Caritas Est, #42).

Today we are drawing close to God through this Mass. As we do, let us ask Him to show us how to draw nearer to those around us during this coming week. Let us be the first ones to forgive, even if the other person is at fault. Let us be the first ones to go out of our way to help someone who is struggling. Let us be the first ones to defend the truth when others attack it. In short, today, let's renew our commitment to make our way through this sin-darkened world by being bright, shining images of God, of the Most Holy Trinity, who is love.

- Fr. David M. Chiantella