

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity (Year B)

May 30, 2021

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, who helps us to understand the words of Jesus and guides us to the truth, we believers can know the intimacy of God and discover that he is a communion of light and love in himself.

No one can see God in this world, but he made himself known, so that, with the apostle John, we can affirm that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). God is love, and we have come to know that he loves us, and we have believed in him. Whoever meets Christ and enters into an intimate relationship with him embraces in one's heart the Trinitarian communion, according to the promise of Jesus to his disciples: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23).

History of the doctrine of the Trinity

Today, I will briefly present to you the historical process of how the Church formulated the doctrine of the Trinity.

First, we must keep in mind that Jesus was always a Jew, which means that he was a monotheistic believer who believed in one God. Jesus did not speak of three persons, that is, "trinity" in God. For Jesus, God is one and nothing more or nothing less.

I say this, because many Christians do not know about it, and some are

surprised to learn that the doctrine of the Trinity is not from the time of Jesus, but much later. Its first definitive formulation is attributed to the Council of Nicaea (325). For this reason, the Gospels cannot speak of the Trinity directly as we know it.

The passage in today's Gospel was added later. Let me explain better what happened in the first centuries of the Church.

Fourth Century: Inculturation of Greek philosophy

The doctrine of the Trinity was officially consecrated only in the fourth century. One very important thing is that the doctrine of the Trinity has a very clear trace of the influence of Greek philosophy. This can be seen in the terms to express the doctrine: *person, substance, nature, hypostasis, etc.*

This means that the doctrine of the Trinity is, in a way, a response of Christianity to that historical moment. The Church was trying to dialogue with the people of a society imbued with Greek philosophy. Christians had just come out of the catacombs.

The doctrine of the Trinity is an exemplary model of how the "inculturation" of a religion comes about in a foreign culture. Judeo-Christianity, which did not use those Hellenistic philosophical categories to speak of God, ended up expressing itself, reformulating itself in a language very different from that of the New Testament.

This response has often been used as a "model" of what should be the inculturation of the Christian faith in other cultures. It is called "the Hellenization of Christianity". It has produced many good fruits but has also brought difficulties in wanting to absolutize one cultural model for expressing the mystery of God in other cultures.

Problems and challenges for Christians today

After the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, Christianity spread to all continents in many different cultures. For this reason, throughout the centuries, we have had the problem of new inculturations. And, above all, today, that Greek philosophy can only be found in history books or academic books, while in real life today almost nobody uses it to answer the current questions and problems of life. The world and its cultures have ceased to rely on Greek philosophy, and yet the Church continues to formulate herself and her doctrines in that philosophy, and to hold those formulas as official, even unchangeable. This is also the case with other terms related to Aristotelian Greek philosophy. For example, the word "transubstantiation" expresses the act that the priest changes bread into the sacramental Body of Jesus with the word of consecration at Mass.

It is very difficult for today's Christians to understand this central mystery of the Eucharist with the idea and language of the Greek philosophy from over 20 centuries ago.

It also happens with the concept of "person", another Greek word with its own cultural content that is not possible to translate into other languages. Undoubtedly, it is very difficult or impossible for many Christians to accept an idea of God with such a human concept.

We should not be so sure that the word "person" can define God, because there is no human word in which God fits. God transcends all human words, and he is a mystery. The Trinity is the mystery of mysteries whose depth we will not be able to understand even in eternal life according to theologians.

Therefore, it is up to us to accept this mystery in faith. We're called to accept God as a God of communion: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. And it is important to know that God dwells within each one of us and that as human beings we will not be happy without being in communion with others and with the nature created by God.

Let me conclude by following the commentary of Fr. José Antonio Pagola to show what Jesus taught us about who and how God is, hoping it can make us feel the living presence of God in the midst of the pandemic that continues to plague humanity.

What Jesus teaches us about God

Jesus didn't write any treatise about God or explain doctrines about God to the peasants of Galilee. For Jesus, God is not a concept, a beautiful theory.

God is the best friend of the human being. The investigators do not doubt a fact that the Gospels gather. The people who heard Jesus speak of God and saw him act on their behalf experienced God as Good News. What Jesus says about God is something new and attractive to them. The experience he communicates and spreads seems to them to be the best news they can hear from God.

The first thing people grasped about God through Jesus was that God the Father belongs to everyone, not only to those who regard themselves as worthy before him in the Temple. God is not tied to a sacred place. He does not belong to a religion. He is not the property of the pious who make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. According to Jesus, God makes his sun rise on the bad and the good and never excludes or discriminates against anyone. Jesus invites everyone to trust in him: "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come'" (Luke 11:2).

With Jesus they discover that God does not belong only to those who come to him full of merit. He listens to those who ask him for compassion, because they know they are sinners. According to Jesus, God is always looking for those who are lost, ready to be a friend of sinners. That is why he tells them that he "has

come to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10), and that "those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do" (Matthew 9:12). They also realize that God does not belong only to the wise and the learned. Jesus gives thanks to the Father because he likes to reveal to the little ones things hidden to the learned. God has less trouble understanding with the simple people than with the learned who think they know everything.

It was undoubtedly the life of Jesus, dedicated in God's name to alleviating the suffering of the sick, freeing those possessed by evil spirits, rescuing the lepers from marginalization, offering forgiveness to sinners and prostitutes that convinced them that Jesus experienced God as the best Friend of the human being, who seeks only our good and opposes only that which harms us. The followers of Jesus never doubt that the God incarnated and revealed in Jesus is Love and only Love towards all.

Let us conclude with prayer: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!

Note: All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE).