

The Trinity

Sunday, December 13, 2020

- The Trinity is God, not just an abstraction model.
- For our opening prayer, we will look at and think about a famous icon of the Trinity by Andrei Rubilev. This icon depicts a visit by three men to Abraham in Genesis 18:1-15. In this visit the Lord revealing his will to make Abraham the father of the Israeli people. Rubilev portrays these visitors as the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- In most interpretations, the Father is at our left, the Son in the middle and the Holy Spirit at our right. Does it matter which is which?
- What else do you see in this icon? What strikes you and what questions does it raise? What do these three figures tell us about the Trinity?



Hymn: *Laus Trinitati* is played during this contemplation

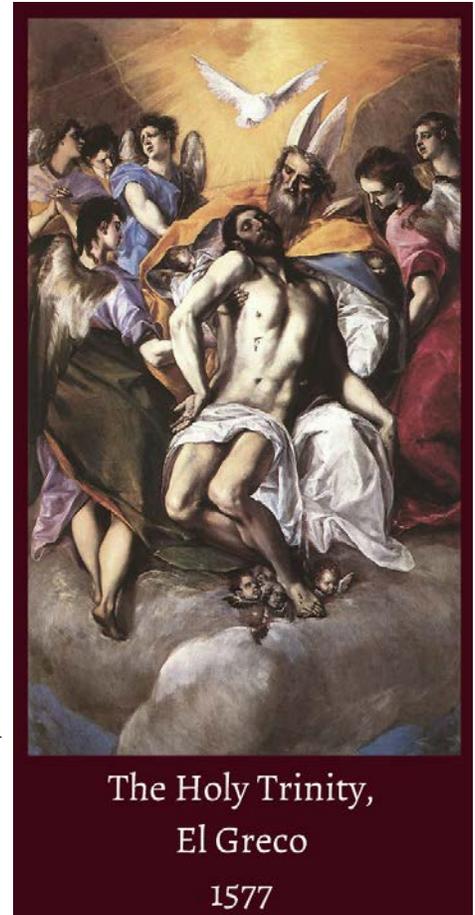
Class reactions and discussion

The Trinity is three but not divided

- The bond of love which is the Holy Spirit causes close union in married couples, among close friends, and within the Church. St. Paul writes “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it”. (1 Corinthians 12:26) We are united with Christ through the Church but retain our individuality
- In God this union is perfect. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit indwell together but preserve their distinctiveness
- The Father could not be the Father without the Son. The Son can only be the Son with the Father. The Holy Spirit is the bond between them. Leaving out one person of the Trinity is not an incomplete idea of God, but a wrong idea. We need all three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to understand God
- The Trinity has three persons in the sense that a person is defined by their relationship to others, not their individuality. A person is a mother, a brother, a close friend or a son, not a stack of achievements or preferences. Jesus himself is called Son of God and Son of Man in the Gospels
- We pray **to** the Father, **through** the Son, **in** the Holy Spirit. Notice the prepositions (in bold). God is the object of prayer, the teacher of prayer and the inspiration for prayer. This shows how the persons of the Trinity work together for one purpose
- St. Paul wrote: “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life”. (Titus 3:4-7) The Triune God loves us and draws us into a relationship as His heir.

The Trinity is one but not solitary

- Spiritual ideas such as beauty, truth and goodness harmonize and complement each other and are seamless. The good is beautiful, the beautiful is true and the true is good. They are not independent ideas
- God is complete. He doesn't need us and doesn't use us. The Trinity is not lonely and imperfect. The icon to the right shows the Father accepting the sacrifice of his Son without anger. This is only possible because the Holy Spirit creates a perfect bond in which the Father wills what the Son wills.
- God is wondrous and varied. Understanding Him isn't easy. St. Augustine wrote "If you understand Him, He is not God."
- When we bless in the **name** of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit we are acknowledging God's love which surrounds us and claims us. Notice that "name" is singular because of God's unity



Marlene Scholz, 20th C.

The Trinity is love

- "You're Nobody Until Somebody Loves You". (Sung by Dean Martin, 1960) The Trinity's love creates meaning in the world and in our lives
- The Father is lover; Son is the beloved; Holy Spirit is the love which bonds and unifies. The one God is the three persons of the Trinity unified by love
- The love of God is the Holy Spirit which overflows and reaches out. This is indwelling turned outward and made present to us
- The painting to the left expresses this outreach

The Sacraments draw us into the life of the God

- The Sacraments re-form us in the image of the God
- Christ shows us what man should be by His love and sacrifice on the cross. His example invites us to become what we truly are, images of God
- We are images of God when we love those who, like ourselves, have failed and sinned: the poor, the misguided, the undisciplined
- The Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to inspire us and to invite us into the life of the God. This invitation gives meaning and hope to our lives
- You will be or already are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
- Go back to the icon on the front page. The table that the Trinity sits at in this icon has room for you. Imagine yourself being part of this image
- If you will be baptized at Easter, you are being drawn into the love of the Trinity
- If you are already baptized and will be confirmed, you are offered a deeper relationship with the Trinity. You are being asked to allow God's love to overflow into you and for you to then reach out to others

Questions

Break

Next week: Sacraments and Popular Devotions, Chapter 22

Any other business

Meditation

Spend time this week contemplating the icon on the first page or a similar image in this Advent season and perhaps use the prayer of St. Catherine of Siena

Prayer of St. Catherine of Siena

Eternal God, eternal Trinity, you have made the blood of Christ so precious through his sharing in your divine nature. You are a mystery as deep as the sea; the more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I search for you.

But I can never be satisfied; what I receive will ever leave me desiring more.

When you fill my soul I have an even greater hunger,
and I grow more famished for your light.

I desire above all to see you, the true light, as you really are.

I have tasted and seen the depth of your mystery and the beauty of your creation with the light of my understanding. I have clothed myself with your likeness

and have seen what I shall be. Eternal Father, you have given me a share in your power and the wisdom that Christ claims as his own,
and your Holy Spirit has given me the desire to love you.

You are my Creator, eternal Trinity, and I am your creature.

You have made of me a new creation in the blood of your Son,
and I know that you are moved with love at the beauty of your creation,
for you have enlightened me.

Closing Prayer

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, un-movable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing be able to trouble my peace or make me leave you, O my unchanging God, but may each minute bring me more deeply into your mystery! Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action.

(St. Elizabeth of the Trinity)

The ultimate real of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity. CCC #480

