

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
June 12, 2022**

SCRIPTURES:

Proverbs 8:22-31 Wisdom was with God at the beginning of creation.
Romans 5:1-5 Through the Spirit, God’s love has been given to us.
John 13:31-35 Jesus promises the Spirit of Truth in those who believe.

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

John:

In John’s Gospel, the community of faith finds itself, as it were, already fulfilled in glory by the awesome gift of the Holy Spirit. Our ultimate destiny is present in us now. There is no waiting for further achievements. The Holy Spirit has been imparted to the Church, not to bring any new revelation but to confirm and to clarify the teaching given by Christ. “He will not speak on his own but will speak only what he hears.” The Spirit will bring to light what has been uttered by Jesus.

Jesus Christ bears in himself the fullness of the divine utterance. There is no further message by which we are to be saved. All that remains is for the Holy Spirit to root the saving Word deeply into the hearts of those who believe. God is present and at work for our salvation in Jesus the Christ; the Holy Spirit of God makes that work effective in the lives of the faithful ones.

The community of John is unique among early Christian communities in its perception of what the disciples of Jesus have become after his resurrection. There is no waiting for more time to pass before the Spirit comes. The Spirit is given them that same day. There is no waiting for the Spirit to begin showing the fruits of its indwelling presence and power. The “glory” of the Risen Lord is already upon them. The kingdom of God is already present and effective in the life of the assembled believers.

They have begun to work the “greater signs” of which Jesus spoke, signs greater still than those he had worked! The “greater signs” are obviously the conversion of the Gentiles, the coming of the whole world to the fellowship of faith. It has already started to happen. There is no turning back. The words of Jesus are being fulfilled before their very eyes.

There can be no greater relationship to which we can aspire than to be united to God who is at work in our lives with such power. Our God expresses love and salvation for us by working through the ministry of Jesus Christ and communicating to us the effect of that work by the power of the Holy Spirit. God expresses the divine function toward us in the deepest reality of the relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit.

Belief in the Trinity of Persons comes as the most obvious conclusion to the hearts of those who know the works of God in history: the signs worked by Jesus Christ while still in the flesh among his disciples on earth and the signs that continue to be worked by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit, day after day, year after year, century after century.

We do not *prove* the existence of the Blessed Trinity. We experience it directly, and we commit ourselves in it in faith.

Proverbs:

After 333 B.C.E., Judaism was constantly challenged by the Hellenistic culture. Greek forms of thought and literature influenced the self-awareness and self-expression of the Jewish people. Greek philosophy asserted itself as everywhere superior to other philosophies. Wisdom literature became the Jewish response to Greek philosophy. The Jews needed to say: “We too have a philosophy” that distinguishes us, sets us apart (above?) from other cultures. We have been given a “wisdom” from the God of Israel, our Father; our “wisdom” partakes of the very mind of God. We are a legitimate nation with a distinctive philosophy, which we call “wisdom.” Wisdom presents itself as a personification of God himself, as a companion of the Lord. The Jewish believer wants to imagine God having a helpmate in the work of creation (a sort of “wife”?) This companion represents some of the feminine attributes of God. In an age when messianic kings no longer reigned politically over Israel, wisdom took on some of that role. Christian faith will see the Christ already alluded to in this personification of God.

Romans:

St. Paul manages, in five short verses, to sketch the grand design of human salvation: we are at peace with God (the Father) because of the grace (gift) of faith given us through Jesus Christ, which results in love poured out into us by the Holy Spirit. Ages past had to struggle to maintain and to renew their covenantal relationship with God after repeated violations and ruptures. Now, in the present, because of the Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all have access to God. *Access* in Greek means: 1. Admission before the royal throne. 2. Safe harbor from storms. That is the condition of the Christian believer today.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What evidence do you see in the life of the Church that the Holy Spirit has been given to the Church? Can you tell that the Church lives by the risen life of the Savior? What are some of the examples that illustrate the life of the Risen Lord in your parish? In your family? Would the world know that the Spirit of Christ has come upon the Church? Are we so very alive with fervor and with zeal as to make people wonder what motivates us?

2. What is that truth into which the Christian community is led by the Spirit? We are accustomed to think of “truth” as something in the head, something that is not false. In the Bible, “truth” means “what God intended.” What does it mean, then, that the Spirit has “led us into the truth?” What was the Church meant to be by God? Has that been fulfilled? In some way? How much of “truth” remains to be fulfilled?

3. If God is to be identified by loving relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, how is the Church to be identified? What role does love have in the shaping of the Church according to its God-intended identity? Can we truly be Christians if we do not love one another? How is love to be promoted in the Church? What can you do in your parish, in your family, to promote love among persons?

PRAYER

**I arise today
Through a mighty strength,
the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness of the Creator of Creation.**
(Prayer attributed to St. Patrick of Ireland)

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE:

The doctrine of the Trinity, which proclaims that God is One in Three Persons, cannot be found in so many words in the Bible. This teaching is one that the Church has developed in order to deal with the complex realities of the external manifestations of God's inner being. Jesus claimed unity with God. The Spirit continues the work of God in the world. What, then, is that inner nature of God that the words of Scripture express as Father, Son, and Spirit?

The inner nature of God cannot be known to the human mind. That constitutes the most holy of all mysteries. What the Church does say in its doctrine on the Trinity is that whatever God is in his inner being (substance), so also is the Son and the Spirit. Without attempting to define what God is, in himself, the Church says the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are equal in divinity, eternal and uncreated.

In response to certain teachings that sought to protect the utter divinity of God but ended up denying the divinity of the Son and the Spirit, the Church had to define who the Son was and who the Spirit was. All that could be said was that whatever the Father was so also was the Son and the Spirit.

The Church has never sought to explain the inner nature (substance) of God. All it could or ever tried to do was to assert the coequality of the Son and of the Holy Spirit with the substance of the Father.

These teachings would be the merest abstractions if we had not experienced in our own lives the absolute equality and power of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit as true presence and true manifestation of the divine power of God in our own lives. If we reflect on our experience, we need to conclude that Jesus Christ has touched our lives as only a divine being could have. The Holy Spirit, too, can only have been equal to God in the transforming power of love that has lifted us from the depths of alienation and joined us to God himself. Our experience validates the doctrine of the Trinity. But our experience does not *prove the Trinity*.

We adore the Holy Trinity as the One God, shown to us as Three Persons. We accept on faith what the Bible says and the way the Church has interpreted that teaching.

(See: **The Catechism: #232-267**)