

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year B

Deut 4:32-34, 39-40

Ps 33

Rom 8:14-17

Matt 28:16-20

Last weekend, on the Solemnity of Pentecost, we celebrated the gift of the Holy Spirit, poured out into the world and upon the Church. And this weekend we celebrate what the Holy Spirit does: the Holy Spirit reveals God to us, drawing us into the innermost depths of his love, allowing us to experience an intimacy with God that, if you think about it, is almost disconcerting.

We perhaps think of Trinity Sunday as something a bit abstract, what with the various theological formulas that have been worked out regarding the Divine Persons, three into one, and so forth. And yet there is a stark intimacy being revealed here that should almost make us blush. In this mystery, we are given an unprecedented view of the innermost depth of God's divine life. God in his totality—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—stands before us, fully revealed. The curtain is parted, the veil removed. We are led into the holy of holies, into the bridal chamber, and the mysteries of God that have laid hidden since the foundation of the world are now laid bare for us to see. It's really quite remarkable.

It's not a perfect analogy, but God's self-revelation to us throughout salvation history is a little bit like what happens over time when a couple falls in love. As a couple gets to know each other, there's a gradual dance of growing vulnerability and trust. So perhaps you first notice them from a distance, and there's an interest there, then eventually you meet, and you learn each other's name. Your first interactions are probably mostly between your respective public personas, those practiced ways we present ourselves to the world that we think will make us look good, just like the make-up or nice clothes we wear to make us look good. But in time, as you start to trust each other a little more, you slowly reveal a little more about yourself. And then, if the other person doesn't run away at that point, in time you might reveal a little more again, and the other person does the same.

And it's with good reason that we take our time revealing our innermost depths to each other, because in doing so we make ourselves vulnerable – in other words, we make ourselves more capable of being hurt. And so we understandably take time to make sure that we can trust the ones we choose to make ourselves vulnerable to.

This is part of what Jesus is getting at when he cautions us to not cast our pearls before swine. Those precious things that that we protect from most people. Our deepest dreams. Our secret fears. Perhaps some kind of physical defect that we are embarrassed of. Perhaps some trauma that we've endured, or some other foundational event from our past that we don't share with many folks, lest they make fun of it.

We also take our time in revealing such things to others for the other person's sake as well. It's not just that we're establishing that we can trust them, we're also giving them time to grow in trust of us, so that, as we slowly reveal a bit more of ourselves, they're not completely freaked out! If we hit them with all our deepest, darkest secrets on the first day it would be too much. Relationships of their nature take time to build.

So as I say, the analogy is far from exact, but God has done something a bit similar to this throughout salvation history. The patriarchs came to know of the Lord and his creative power. Abraham came to learn that the Lord—though mysterious—can be trusted, and was on his side. Moses was revealed the divine name, and the mission to guide a chosen people. Through the psalms and the wisdom literature, the Lord revealed more about his nature and his attributes. And through the prophets he revealed how we are to relate to him and to others in a way that is right and just.

Finally, in the fulness of time, he comes among us in the Person of the Son. And in so doing, he reveals the universality of his call – that he is in fact on the side of *all* of us. He reveals the totality of his love, dying the death of an outcast, so that none of us need be outcasts any more. In his Resurrection, he reveals the totality of his power, even power over death. In his Ascension, he reveals the eternal home he has prepared for us. And in sending the Holy Spirit, he reveals his Trinitarian heart.

As we celebrate the Mystery of the Trinity, we celebrate God's most intense desire, manifest in the Holy Spirit, that we know him, really and truly, as he is. That we not just believe in a vague notion of the divine, in shadows and figures. God does not wear make-up. He does not wear a mask. He is not God for us in one way and God in himself another way. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, reveals to us the true God.

The Trinity is not just one nice way to think about God among many – one metaphor among many that speaks to some deeper truth underlying all religions or worldviews. No, the revelation of the Trinity is not the revelation of a metaphor, but of the reality of God's inner nature, of who he really and truly is.

In a certain sense you could say it's quite a risk from God to reveal all this to us, given how often we have proven to be slow of mind and hard of heart. So why does God do this? Why does he reveal himself so completely to us?

Because of his love for us – that is the ultimate reason. God's self-revelation as a Trinity of Persons is an act of incomparable love for us for countless reasons, but for now I just want to focus on two of them.

The first way that God loves us by revealing himself to us, is that in so doing he helps us to become who *we* truly are, which enables us to find true happiness and peace both in this world and in the next. This is because in knowing God as he truly is, we also know who we are and the purpose for which we have been created. We are made in his image and likeness, and so we most truly understand ourselves and the meaning of

our lives when we understand God. His revelation of himself has the effect of revealing us to ourselves. A true encounter with God as a Trinity of love—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—shows us why we exist. We are led into the very mind of the God who made us, who sustains us, who knows the absolute truth about who we are and the purpose of our lives.

Think of how much time people spend trying to figure out who they are – all of the personality quizzes and various other ways that people try to understand themselves. And such tools are all so limited – most of the time they just end up showing us who we wish we were or who we think we are, or who others wished we were or think we are. But all of these wishes and opinions of others are limited, because they are based on limited understanding and knowledge. To truly know ourselves, we need to know God in whose image and likeness we are made. Know him as he truly is, and you will know yourself as you truly are.

This leads us to the second way that God shows his love for us by revealing himself to us. And that is that, in knowing the true God, we are able to avoid being enslaved by the false gods of this world.

We often think that chasing after false gods is only something that people did in ancient times. And yet our world is full of things that essentially promise to take the place of God in our lives, and leave us starving as a result. Material wealth, comfort, pleasure, reputation, acceptance, power – these false gods constantly tug at our hearts, try to draw us in with their charm. They promise us happiness, promise us satisfaction, promise to alleviate every fear. They act as though they have power, as though they are running this world of ours. They offer instant gratification, and their temples are always full of people who seem to be making it in this world, who seem to have found worldly happiness.

But it is all a house of cards. When these idols are revealed to us as they truly are, they are shown to be mere mirages, leaving us empty. As the Psalmist says, “They have eyes but they cannot see, they have ears but they cannot hear, they have mouths, but they cannot speak – and their makers will come to be like them.”

And so these worldly idols must keep us at a distance. The fulness of power and money and comfort and reputation that we crave always stays just outside of our reach, never quite within our grasp. It is the nature of a false god to not want to be really known, because then the game would be up.

How different these false idols are from the true and living God, the Triune God who is revealed to us in the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit reveals God to us there is nothing superficial about the encounter. We are brought face to face with the living God.

The true God, the Triune God, does not woo us like the rest of these false suitors. He does not promise us earthly success – he disdains the trivialities of money, or worldly

power, or comfort, or reputation. Christ voiced his frustration on numerous times at how prone we are to being won over by such lame excuses for the divine. Yet how often we try to set up for ourselves gods that do not challenge us, that do not ask anything from us, that promise to keep us comfortable.

If we were honest with ourselves, I suspect that most of us would acknowledge that the thought of being face to face with God is a bit daunting. In our weaker moments, even those of us committed to our faith can find ourselves preferring to stick with the idols that don't challenge us, with a superficial kind of spiritual life. Keep the distractions blaring, and keep busy with life as usual.

But because of his great love for us, the Triune God does not leave us to wallow in this-worldly slavery. He reveals the truth of himself to us, enabling us to live in the freedom that comes from worshiping the true God and knowing the truth about ourselves.

They say that you are what you eat, which we will no doubt touch on in next week's celebration of Corpus Christi, of the Body and Blood of our Lord. But it's even more true to say that we become what we worship. *We become what we worship.* When we worship the truth, when we worship the Triune God, life may not always be comfortable or easy, but listen to what Saint Paul says about those who worship the true God in his letter to the Romans:

“Through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God, since it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory. But that is not all we can boast about; we can boast about our sufferings. These sufferings bring patience, as we know, and patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us.” (Romans 5:1-5)

When we know the true God, we know ourselves and are free to be ourselves. And in time, by becoming more ourselves, we come to resemble the God whom we worship, and in whose image we are made—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a communion of perfect divine love.