

Feast of the Holy Trinity
June 7, 2009
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Relationship

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

Psalm 33

Romans 8:14-17

Matthew 28:16-20

If I asked a father to introduce his son to me, I would hope he would not respond, “I want you to meet my blood relative; he’s shares part of my genetic material.” That answer would be very weird and would seem cold and detached. Instead, I would expect the man to say, “I want you to meet my *son*, Joseph.” The first answer has to do with *substance*; the second answer has to do with *relationship*.

It used to be that the most popular way to talk about the mystery of the Holy Trinity was to refer to the shared substance of the Three Persons in One God. The Nicene Creed that we pray every Sunday at Mass is a good example of the emphasis placed on the Trinity’s shared substance. We say that Jesus Christ is “one in being with the Father,” or *homoousios* in Greek. For most of us, this approach to the Trinity is as weird and detached as the father who refers to his son as his partial DNA. Because of this, a new emphasis has arisen in theological circles that stresses the Trinity’s shared *relationship* over shared *substance*.¹ This is a far more intimate way of describing God—an intimacy that we heard about in our Scripture readings today.

To reverence the Trinity’s shared relationship means to recognize that the Three Persons of our One God share one another with one another. This is their relationship—an eternal sharing, in love, of one another with the other. This cannot happen with just two Persons. With a third Person, there is always one who is the gift shared between the other Two. This is an important reality for us to talk about since you and I are made in the image and likeness of God. In other words, we have been created for relationship—to be shared with one another in love, with God being the third party in that sharing. As I try to explain how this works, we will (hopefully) see the awesome implications of our relationship with one another and God, which, as I mentioned, is modeled on the Trinity’s relationship.

For the sake of simplicity, I am going to refer to the three individuals in relationship with one another as—me, you, and God. “Me” refers to each of us; “you” refers to those people God places around us; and “God” refers to the fullness of the Trinity. There are four important dynamics in this relationship between me, you, and God. The first dynamic occurs when you give God to me as a gift. This happens multiple times every day. There are people who bring God and the qualities of God to us. This might be done explicitly, like when an extraordinary minister of Communion brings us the Eucharist, or it might be done more implicitly when you chose to pray for me, or you give me the better parking space at Wal-Mart, or you smile at me, or you send me a note of encouragement. In all of these instances, you are bringing God to me as a gift! The fruit of this relationship is gratitude. My heart is filled with thankfulness when you help reveal God to me. When we are struggling with ungratefulness; when we find ourselves

¹ See the article, “Biodiversity and the Holy Trinity” in America Magazine at www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=1345

constantly complaining and bemoaning things, we can move toward gratitude by simply choosing to become more aware of how others have shared God with us.

Another dynamic occurs when I bring God to you. It could be in all of the ways that I mentioned above. However, something different happens in my heart when it is *me* sharing God with *you*—I experience a tremendous *joy*! This means that if I am struggling with non-chemical depression, selfishness, apathy, or desolation, I can experience a renewal of joy by choosing to share God with other people.

A third dynamic occurs when God shares me with you. When we become conscious of the fact that God loves us so much that He desires to share us with other people, our hearts are filled with humility. Imagine the humility the Apostles must have felt when Christ commissioned them and sent them out to spread the Good News! God, out of His awesome love for them and for the world, desired to share them with others. When we are struggling with pride and arrogance, we can move toward humility by deliberately becoming more conscious of those many times each day that God, out of love for us, chose to share us—our words and deeds—with other people that they might be blessed.

The last dynamic regarding the relationship we have with God and others occurs when God shares you with me. This happens when I become aware of the fact that God purposefully chose you, with the particular gifts He has given to you, to be a blessing to me in a special way. When this happens, my heart is filled with love. A great example of this dynamic is marriage. In the Sacrament of marriage people recognize that God, out of His love for them, has given them another person as a special gift. When we are struggling with anger, hate, resentment, loneliness, isolation, etc., we can meditate on the many ways each day that God shares other people with us and we will find ourselves consumed with love.

The inner life of the Holy Trinity reminds us of the importance of *relationship*. When we choose, through prayerful meditation and reflection, to become conscious of our relationship with God and others, then we find our hearts being expanded in gratitude, joy, humility, and love.

SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:

- Before going to bed, spend a few minutes recalling your day. Recall at least one time when-- you shared God with others, others revealed God to you, God blessed you through another person, and God blessed someone else through you.
- Take some time to meditate on the words of Ephesians 4:1-6, focusing on how the verses describe *relationship*.

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

-Ephesians 4:1-6