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The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Holy Mother Church proposes for our reflection and meditation today the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. The central tenet of the Christian faith knows that God is one God in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who exists in "perfect Trinity and simple Unity."¹ This is a difficult reality for our minds to grasp because we are so caught up with physicality and the material world.

What then can we say about the Trinity? We know that the Blessed Trinity is,

without beginning and without end, unchangeable, invisible, indescribable, ineffable, incomprehensible, unfathomable, blessed, worthy of praise, glorious, exalted on high, sublime, most high, gentle, lovable, delectable and totally desirable above all else forever!²

It sometimes seems that the more we try to understand the mystery of the Trinity the more confused we become and the less we understand God. Why, then, does the Church give us this Solemnity? What are we to say of this unspeakable mystery?

Firstly, this must be acknowledged: the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God. Secondly, this must be

¹ Saint Francis of Assisi, *A Letter to the Entire Order*, 52 in *The Classics of Western Spirituality: Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady, trans. and ed. (Mahwah, New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 61.

² *Ibid.*, 134.

acknowledged: the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father; the Father is not the Spirit, nor is the Spirit the Father; the Son is not the Spirit nor is the Spirit the Son. We see in this that the Blessed Trinity is a community of divine Persons, not three gods, but One because the three Persons are of the same substance.

Because we are made in the image and likeness of God, we should be able to discern his image within us (cf. Genesis 1:26). If we truly examine ourselves, we will all readily admit that, "in the heart of every man - a beggar for love - is a thirst for love."³ What do we desire more than love itself? Do we not desire wealth and possessions and power so as not to focus on the lack of love that we feel?

Each of us is, at the core our being, a beggar for love, one who searches and longs for authentic love. Too often do we seek it in the things of this world. This love that we seek can only be found in God, for "God is love, and he who ever remain in love remains in God and God in him" (I John 4:16). God reveals himself to us as Triune so that we might come to know him more deeply through love, which "is of God," and so grow in union with him (I John 4:7). Even so, what can we say about the Most Holy Trinity?

³ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 29 March 2007.

Is it possible to truly know God? It is true that we cannot fully comprehend the mystery of God; nevertheless, we must know something of him whom we are to love, to the extent that he allows.

If we do not know him whom we love we run the risk of loving a false notion or impression of God, a shadow of God, as it were; we run the risk of loving a god made in our own image. Far too many people today love God as they imagine him to be rather than as he truly is because they do not truly know him, because they do not seek his face (cf. Psalm 105:4).

These are they who love a god who does not care what we do but simply accepts us as we are. These love a mistaken notion of God whom they say wants nothing more of us than that we be good people; that it doesn't matter what we think, believe, wear, listen to, speak or buy. These also are they who believe God to be somehow distant and lonely, aloof from the cares of the world, the Creator of all who has since distanced himself from his creation.

None of these are truly what God is like, as even a cursory reading of the Scriptures will show. God is not lonely and aloof, but is a union of three, who passionately watches over his flock and draws us to himself by placing within us the longing for his love.

Why does this matter? Is all of this not mere philosophical and theological argument? No! For what we believe about God affects every aspect of our life, and our eternal salvation. It matters because "our happiness resides in our enjoyment of the Trinity, and if our belief about it is false, our hope will be vain, our love not pure."⁴

All of these people with false images of God place their "hope and love in a lie" for they do not yet know the source of love.⁵ Because of their laziness in delving into the infinite mystery of the Godhead they do not know God. Let us seek today to understand - and so come to know and love - God who is Three and yet One.

Recall again that St. John says "God is love" (I John 4:16). Wherever there is love three things are always necessarily present: the one who loves, the one who is loved, and the love itself because of itself love requires both someone to be loved and someone to do the loving. Love cannot exist singularly and alone.

As we have already seen, each of us is a "beggar for love," one who has a deep thirst for love within us that cannot be quenched without God who is love. Here, then, we find a good analogy to help us understand, so far as we are allowed, the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

⁴ Saint Augustine, *On the Trinity* 5.8, 320.

There are three divine Persons in the Trinity: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Using the analogy of love, the Father is the Lover, the Son is the Beloved, and the Holy Spirit is the Love shared between them. It is, as it were, as though the Father eternally gazes upon the Son and the Son gazes eternally upon the Father and their shared gaze is the Holy Spirit, their love, one for the other.

Now, love of itself must be shared and communicated. If it is kept to or for itself it is not truly love, but rather a mere sentiment, a weak and fading shadow of love. The tremendous and overflowing love of God was revealed to us, communicated to us, shared with us in Jesus Christ, in God made man. So great is this unifying love of the Trinity that God chose to unite himself with man so that man might be united with God!

In the waters of Baptism we are ushered into the life of the Trinity; we are given a share in God's own life. In the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation we are given God's own spirit and power to follow faithfully after Christ Jesus. In the Eucharistic sacrifice we are nourished by God himself; we receive his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, so as to remain united to the Trinity, to share forever in this divine love. In the forgiveness of sins given in the sacrament of Penance, our unity with the Trinity, damaged by our sin, is restored by God's

⁵ Ibid, 319.

merciful love. In the sacrament of marriage, husband and wife are given to the world as a mirror of the love of God. Bishops, priests and deacons, through the laying on of hands in the sacrament of Holy Orders, must make this unifying love known to the world through their preaching and the worthy administration of the sacraments. Through the healing grace of the Anointing of the Sick, we are united to the suffering Christ and, if it is good for our salvation, the love of God restores us to health. All of the sacraments foster our union with God for those who are well disposed to receive them.

Such is the tremendous love of the Triune God! The Church gives us this feast today to ponder the glorious union to which God calls us. Let us, today, this very moment, gaze in wondrous love upon the mystery of the Trinity so that we might enjoy the blessed vision of God forever in heaven. Amen.