

Friday (St. John of the Cross)

It should not be held as incredible in a soul that the promise of the Son of God be fulfilled, the promise that the most Blessed Trinity will come and dwell in anyone who loves him. The Blessed Trinity inhabits the soul by divinely illuminating its intellect with the wisdom of the Son, delighting its will in the Holy Spirit, and absorbing it powerfully and mightily in the unfathomable embrace of the Father's sweetness.

Scripture (Jn. 14:10-11,23,25-26)

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; anyone who loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we shall love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him. I have said these things while still with you, but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything.

If you would like more detailed notes from a discussion on the questions below, arising from the readings, please go to www.sthelenscrosby.org.uk
Click on 'Prayer' and find us under 'Thinking outside the pew'.

Q1 How big, how powerful is the love of God the Father?

Q2 How did God the Son change our relationship with God?

Q3 How does God the Holy Spirit complete the relationship?

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Feast of the Holy Trinity

One God, three relationships with us

In an age where 'facts' and scientific or rational explanations are accepted as 'the truth', our thinking has, in some ways, become more limited. Because people demand 'evidence' before they commit to accepting something, and, increasingly, where much of our information about, and view of, the world is presented in easy to digest, social-media friendly, there seems to be little awareness of the truths contained in the mysteries of Faith. "Three persons in One God", for example, doesn't make sense at the rational level, but as it expresses a fundamental truth upon which our faith rests, it should be one of the beliefs which my life is built on and determined by.

If I begin to analyse and explain the Trinity, as our age demands, I will inevitably try to simplify it to something which 'makes sense', i.e. is within the limits of my human understanding. Any attempt to explain the Trinity leads me to think of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being different but closely related, (divine triplets?). The problem is that to divide God is to reduce him: if Jesus is divided from God, he can no longer be fully God and man, and the Spirit would not be fully Jesus; the Father, meanwhile would, be the one who is in heaven or present in some way which I can't really relate to, since anything infinite is beyond my understanding.

The Catechism points out that there are two ways to understand the Trinity: by theology or by looking at the way the Trinity works. As I am clearly struggling with the first way, perhaps the readings for the Feast will help with the second way.

In Exodus 34:4-9, Moses meets God on Mt. Sinai. To understand this fully, you need to read Exodus 32-34 to get a sense of the infinite power of God: having only one word for 'love', we tend to feel comfortable talking of God's love for us, but Exodus shows it is so powerful, so immense, that we cannot meet him face to face. In view of this, Moses' request that God should accompany the clearly unworthy Israelites strikes me as one of those moments when a prophet risks God saying, "don't push your luck, mate."

Clearly, though, this is precisely what God wants. He is not a remote God but one who longs to be intimately involved with us. In John 3:16-18, Jesus teaches that in him, God is revealed in the world. The word of God has, in Jesus, become a living part of our world: because of the Incarnation, death and Resurrection of Jesus, he was, as a human, able to sit at the right hand of the Father, i.e enter into his eternal life.

Jesus explains that this is why he came – so that all who may believe maybe saved and have eternal life. Many of us associate 'eternal life' with heaven, and 'saved' with 'saved from our sins' (and from hell), but this is not what Jesus is referring to. 'Eternal life' is the life of the Father, and it is available now, as is clear in Paul's prayer, (2 Cor. 13:11-13), that the love of God, (the same infinite, too powerful love which only Moses could draw near), the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, (a title which describes his divine nature) and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us. This fellowship is what draws us into the relationship with God which Jesus had, through the Spirit in us, as revealed when we are baptised, (immersed) in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is because we live in this relationship that Paul can wish for us the deep joy of knowing God, (in the biblical sense of experiencing him) and to tell people to try to 'grow perfect' through loving each other, because this infinite love will be with us more intimately and more powerfully because of Jesus and the Spirit. Martin Bennett

Monday (Thomas Merton)

The Lord made his world not in order to judge it, not in order merely to dominate it, to make it obey the dictates of an inscrutable and all-powerful will, not in order to find pleasure or displeasure in the way it worked. The Lord made the world and humans in order that he himself might descend into the world, that he himself might become man. The world was not made as a prison for fallen spirits who were rejected by God. The world was made as a temple, a paradise, into which God himself would descend to dwell familiarly with the spirits he had placed there to tend it for him.

Scripture (1 John 4:14-19)

We ourselves have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as Saviour of the world. Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. Love comes to its perfection in us when we can face the Day of Judgement fearlessly, because even in this world we have become as he is. In love there is no room for fear, because fear implies punishment and whoever is afraid has not come to perfection in love.

Tuesday (Julian of Norwich)

We are enfolded in the Father, and we are enfolded in the Son, and we are enfolded in the Holy Spirit. And the Father is enfolded in us, and the Son is enfolded in us, and the Holy Spirit is enfolded in us. Our soul rests in God its true peace; our soul stands in God its true strength, and is deep-rooted in God for endless love. And if we in our blindness and weakness should at any time fall, we should quickly rise and go at once to God in love; not on the one hand crawling abjectly as if we were in despair, nor, on the other, being over-bold as if we thought it did not matter.

Scripture (Exodus 34:4-6,8-9)

Moses went up Mount Sinai in the early morning as Yahweh had ordered. And Yahweh descended in a cloud and stood with him there and pronounced the name Yahweh. Then Yahweh passed before him and called out, 'Yahweh, Yahweh, God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy.' Moses immediately bowed to the ground in worship, then he said, 'If indeed I do enjoy your favour, please, my Lord, come with us, although they are an obstinate people; and forgive our faults and sins, and adopt us as your heritage.'

Wednesday (Cardinal Newman)

The Holy Spirit himself perchance in his mysterious nature, is the eternal love whereby the Father and the Son have dwelt in each other, as the ancient writers have believed; and what he is in heaven, that he is abundantly on earth. He lives in the Christian heart, as the never failing fountain of love. Thus the Spirit of God creates in us the simplicity and warmth of heart which children have, nay, rather the perfections of his heavenly hosts, high and low being joined together in his mysterious work.

Scripture (2 Cor. 3:12-18)

Moses put a veil over his face so that the Israelites should not watch the end of what is transitory. But their minds were closed; indeed, until this very day, the same veil remains over the reading of the Old Testament: it is not lifted for only in Christ is it done away with. As it is, to this day, whenever Moses is read their hearts are covered with a veil, and this veil will not be taken away until they turn to the Lord. Now this Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect with brighter and brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.

Thursday (St. Thomas Aquinas)

The meaning of possessing something is that it is in our power to use it and enjoy it at will. To have the power to rest joyfully in a divine person is ours by reason of grace alone. Still, as grace is given the Holy Spirit is possessed and dwells in a person and so it is he himself who is given and sent. Admittedly, effect of grace is also from the Father, who abides in us through grace even as do the Son and the Holy Spirit. The entire Trinity abides in the soul by reason of sanctifying grace.

Scripture (Ephesians 2:17-22)

He came to bring peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near. Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit have free access to the Father. So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the Holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you, too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit.