

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, May 31, 2015

Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth

Grand Prairie, TX

Deut 4:32-34, 39-40; Rom 8:14-17; Mt 28:16-20

Fr. Julius Leloczky

Today is Trinity Sunday. I suppose in a sermon on the Holy Trinity you may expect to hear some mental gymnastics about how three at the same time can also be one, and how one can be at the same time also three. Since I don't want to pretend that I can penetrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity, I'd rather avoid such elucidations and just talk in more general and down-to-earth terms about the question: What is God?

Well, what is God? Who is God? We learned in school that God is omnipotent, all-powerful. He is eternal, timeless, limitless – that is, infinite in every way. God is spiritual, immaterial, and therefore incorruptible. God is good, His goodness knows no limits: God is all goodness, without the smallest trace of evil. God is infinite intelligence, is omniscient, all-knowing. He knows everything about all His creatures. He is present everywhere; there is no spot in the universe where He would not be. He is also infinitely wise; His wisdom is absolute. These are all attributes of God which can be figured out by the mere human mind, by mere philosophy, without divine revelation, without the Bible. If there is a God, He must be like this. Without any of these traits He would not be God.

Now, what does divine revelation say about God? What do we read about God in the Bible? When Moses asked God at the burning bush, what His name was, he received from God a mysterious response: YAHWEH; I AM WHO I AM. And then God added: “This is my name; this will be my name forever.” What does

this name mean? It's an ambiguous answer. God gave a name to Moses and, at the same time, He refused to give a name. Yes, it is a name by which God could be called (even if later Jews were forbidden ever to pronounce this name, and substituted is by the name "Adonai", "Lord") but, at the same time, it is a no-name, it means also that in reality God does not have a name because no name can express what He is. He cannot be boxed into any human word because He breaks through every word, every human concept. Indeed, no created idea can contain Him.

Now, is this all we can know about God? Must we be satisfied with hearing that we can know nothing about the essence of God, what and who He really is? Yes, we can say that we have to be satisfied with the realization that with our limited human mind we will never be able to penetrate the mystery of the One who made us and who made the whole universe because God is infinitely bigger than our human minds. But we can realize that God is not an unsolvable enigma or some kind of a puzzle ever beyond our understanding, because we can learn who God is if we listen to how He spoke to His people. In Isaiah God comforts His chosen ones: "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you" (Is 49:15). God is compared here to the mother of an infant who cares for her baby with great tenderness. In Hosea God speaks to His chosen people even more boldly as a lover does to his bride. He says: "I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy: I will espouse you in fidelity and you shall know the Lord" (Hos 2:21-22). Yes, God says, this is the way we shall know the Lord: not by meticulous analysis, not by straining our mind beyond its capacity: we will know Him by experience, by experiencing Him as our tender loving Lord. God is not a theory or a mathematical formula to be understood by mere

speculation: God is to be received by a human person as a Father, as a Parent, as the closest Friend, as a Lover, as a Spouse. This is what God wanted to tell Moses at the burning bush: God's mystery cannot be penetrated by the efforts of the human mind: who God ultimately is can be fathomed only by a feeling human heart. There are times when the heart is more intelligent and perceptive than the smartest mind.

Jesus Christ is our principal teacher of learning who God is. Jesus Christ is God's full revelation to human beings. Jesus came for that particular purpose: to teach us who God is. Looking at Him, listening to Him is the principal way to learn about God. Jesus went around in the Holy Land doing good, performing miracles, teaching the truth. Seeing this, we learn that God is good, He is powerful, and He knows everything. In the final days of Jesus' earthly life we see Him arrested, tortured, and murdered. When we realize that all these happened because of us, that Jesus Christ suffered, went through a terrible ordeal and gave His life for us, we understand that the most important characteristic feature of God is love. All of God's attributes are essential, *sine-qua-non* features, but the main, over-arching quality of all of them is love. When the evangelist St. John was looking for a way to define who God is, he found these three brief words to express the essence of God: "God is love" – and this is, maybe, the most important statement of the New Testament Bible; the main condition to know God is that the person who wants to know God, himself/herself has to be in love.

This is the text: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God: everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love, does not know God, for GOD IS LOVE. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might have life through Him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His

Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us” (1Jn 4:7-12).

In the Bible, the words “to know” and “to love” are interchangeable. Love comes from knowledge, and knowledge comes from love. Love cannot be left out of the process of knowledge. If we want to know God, we have to love Him.

Love is intimate communication between two persons. Since God is love, loving communication, by absolute necessity, God must be a community. A God existing in an icy, lonely solitude is unimaginable. A lonesome God would be unable to love. This is why God is – and must be – a community, a community of three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father pronounces Himself totally in love in the eternal present of the divinity, this Word becomes the Father’s exact image in love; they are two equal divine Persons in an absolute unity, and the burning, eternal love uniting them is the third divine person, the Holy Spirit. This infinite divine love has been cascading between the three divine Persons for all eternity when, out of that eternal love God created the spiritual beings of angels and the whole material universe. And at one point of human history, this Son, the Word, the perfect image of the Father put on the human nature and came among us as Jesus of Nazareth.

The first revelation of the sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity happened at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River: “After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” (Mt 3:16-17). The words “beloved” and “with whom I am well pleased” express

perfectly the intimate love relationship uniting the Father and His Son, Jesus, by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The most remarkable and most wonderful feature of the mystery of the Holy Trinity is that we human beings are not just neutral bystanders contemplating it from the “outside” but, by the grace of God, we are involved in the mystery: we are participants in it. Jesus Christ, by becoming a human being and redeeming us by His blood, made every willing person His brother and sister, and as He is sharing the divine life flowing between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, He made us, His brothers and sisters, also sharers of it. St. John calls this participation in the inner life of the Triune God “eternal life” that we receive already here on earth by the gift of faith and baptism and will possess in heaven for all eternity. As a presentation of this reality, we should read chapter 17 of the gospel of St. John. Among other things John writes down these words of Jesus’ prayer: “Now this is eternal life, that they should know [love] you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. ... I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them” (Jn 17: 3.26).

Amen.