

Sermon for Trinity Sunday

Beloved in Christ,

the Second Vatican Council in its constitution on the sacred liturgy states that priests are to preach by explaining either the biblical readings or the liturgical texts of Holy Mass. Today being the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity I wish to make some reflections on this greatest mystery of our religion by reference to a liturgical text the priest prays at the ablution of the chalice after receiving the Precious Blood at Holy Mass. Extending the chalice to a server for a drop of wine prior to rinsing it with water he prays: *Corpus Tuum, Domine, quod sumpsi, et Sanguis, quem potavi . . . May Thy Body, O Lord which I have received, and Thy Blood which I have drunk, cling to my inmost being; and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me, who have been fed with this pure and holy Sacrament; Thou Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen.*

This magnificent prayer places in focus the whole of our relationship with God and the divine economy of our sacramental life. Today,

what may seem incomprehensible in the Mystery of the Trinity is made the more adorable when we consider its relationship to ourselves and the prayer just cited: that is, the unfathomable depth of God's love in opening His own divine life to our souls, our very being.

We know by faith that in God there are 3 distinct Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; though distinct in persons these three are of but one and the same nature or Divine essence. The Father, Who is also infinite understanding, has absolute and all pervading knowledge of His divine perfections. He expresses this knowledge in one unique utterance: it is "the Word," the living, substantial utterance, the commensurately infinite expression of who the Father is. In uttering this Word, the Father begets His Son to whom He communicates all His essence, His nature, His perfections, His very life: "For as the Father has life in Himself; so He has given to the Son also to have life in Himself."

Here I must put out a *caveat*, a caution against grasp too absolutely the meaning of human expression in the sense which arises from our own limited, created experience. To say,

“begets his son,” – if used of *our* life – would imply that there was a time when the son did not exist, and then, that he then came into being. Here is the caveat: *time* does not apply to God: God simply *is*. When we say, therefore, in the Nicene Creed that God the Son is “eternally begotten of the Father” *eternally* connotes there has been no beginning and no end. Even though the Son assuredly “proceeds” from the Father, the Son is, nevertheless, absolutely co-eternal with the Father: the Son is eternal God as the Father is eternal God.

This eternally begotten Son is also entirely His Father’s own – entirely given up to Him by a total donation stemming from His nature as *Son*. From this mutual donation, which arises from only one, infinite and divine love, proceeds, (from that one unique source) the Holy Spirit Who seals the union of the Father and the Son. This sealing union is the substantial and living *love* - which is the Father and the Son’s together.

This mutual communication of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, this adherence – infinite and all loving – of the Divine Persons between themselves is a supernatural revela-

tion which regards the sublime *holiness* of God: it is the union of God with Himself, in the unity of His nature and the Trinity of His Persons. This is not knowable from nature or reason, but has been revealed to this world through the Second Person of the Trinity, united in time with our flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, the carpenter's son Who was born of the Virgin Mary. God, born of man – Who once walked among us and spoke to us of the things of eternity.

Let us reflect for a moment on this holiness of the Trinity. Each of the Persons is identical with the Divine essence and consequently of a substantial holiness; this, because each Person acts *only* in conformity with this essence considered as supreme norm of life and activity. The Persons are holy because each of them gives Himself – and is the Others' – in an act of infinite adhesion. What is more, the Third Person, God's Spirit, is particularly called "holy" because He proceeds from the other two through *love* – the principal act by which the will tends to and is united with its desired end.

Beloved, in this inexpressibly united and fruitful life, God finds all His essential beati-

tude. To exist God has need only of Himself: finding all bliss in the perfections of His nature and in the ineffable society of His Persons, He has no need of any creature. It is to Himself – in Himself, in His Triune *being* – that He relates the glory welling forth from His infinite perfections. One commentator has aptly said, “The whole divine life proceeds from God the Father to His Divine Son and returns to Him through their Holy Spirit: proceeds from Him without going out of Him: returns to Him without having been separated from Him . . . It is like a fountain which ever springs and flows within its own Divine Self.”

By an absolutely gratuitous love which reaches *beyond* Himself, God resolved to give creatures a share in His own divine life. There is no necessity in God beyond the ineffable communications of the Divine Persons among themselves, mutual relations belonging to the very essence of God – this is God’s own life. Every *other* communication of Himself which God does make is the fruit of a love that is sovereignly free. But as this love is *divine*, the gift he gives is *divine* as well. God loves *divinely*; He gives Himself *divinely*. Thus *we* are

called to receive, in ineffable measure, this divine communication. God means not only to give Himself to us as Supreme Beauty, object of contemplation, *but He means – and actually does – unite Himself to us so as to make Himself, so far as is possible, one with us.*

“Father,” said the Lord Jesus at the Last Supper, “may my disciples be one in us, as You and I are one, in order that they find in this union the unending joy of our own beatitude.”

Beloved in God, the absolute miracle of our religion is that God has decreed that *we, wretches that we are*, should enter and share this *inner life which belongs to Him alone*. God wishes to communicate to us the unfathomable happiness which has its source in the fullness of His Infinite Being. That is grace beyond all telling.

And so *our* holiness must consist in adhering to God as *known and loved*. Not simply as the author of creation, but *as God knows and loves Himself in the bliss of His Trinity*. To be united with God to the point of sharing His inner life – that is what our holiness must consist of.

It is for this very reason that St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that our subjective holiness must possess two characteristics: 1) *purity* – the distancing of oneself from every sin, every imperfection; detachment from everything created; and 2) *stability* – that we steadfastly adhere to God in all things. These two elements correspond, in God, to the *all-perfection* of His infinite transcendent Being and the *immutability of His will* in adhering to Himself as supreme good and love.

And so let us return, on this Feast of the Most Holy and Sublime Trinity, to the priest's prayer after communion: *May Thy Body, O Lord which I have received, cling to my inmost being; and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me, who have been fed with this pure and holy Sacrament . . .*

Next Sunday we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, the abiding gift of Christ's Body and Blood by which we are made, even now, participants in the divine life of the Trinity. Let us ask the Holy Spirit, Whose descent upon the apostles and unerring guidance to the Church we celebrated for the past eight days, let us ask this Personification of Divine Love

itself, to keep us faithful to our Father's will: that in passing through the transitory things of this life – ever changing, ever fading away – we may never lose that one, true good for which we have been created: possession of the Triune God in the glory of the angels. That Most Holy, Most Sublime Trinity, God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, even *now* gives us a share in His own life by feeding us with the most pure Sacrament of His Son's Body and Blood. By its power may we live in all purity, ever confessing our sins, and never departing from Him. To Whom be all honor, praise and glory, now and even unto the ages of ages. Amen