

We Give You Thanks for Your Great Glory

Biblical Reflection for Solemnity of Most Holy Trinity C

By Father Thomas Rosica, CSB

TORONTO, MAY 25, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://zenit.org)).- On the Sunday that follows Pentecost, we celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, who helps us understand Jesus' words and guides us to the whole truth, believers can have a personal experience of the intimacy of God himself, discovering that he is not infinite solitude but communion of light and love, life given and received in an eternal dialogue between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

Lady Wisdom, the communicator

Today's first reading from Proverbs (8:22-31) speaks about Lady Wisdom, the person created by God before the creation of the world to communicate God's love and to guide us in peaceful living. Wisdom in many ways parallels the New Testament Holy Spirit. Even if we are unable to rationally explain the Trinity, we still are required to manifest the triune God by our actions.

The Book of Proverbs is the most "earthy" of all the books of the Bible. Within this collection of short, pragmatic sayings, which fill most of the book, there is a beautiful, mystical reflection in Chapter 8. "Lady Wisdom" is personified (given human traits) in an attempt to describe the ways in which God chooses to reveal divine nature.

Wisdom is presented as something very intimately involved with God, and in later writings wisdom is perceived as the quality human beings need to discern God's activity in the world. Wisdom's superiority over all things is due to her origin before them. While wisdom is seen to emanate from God's mysterious abode, still it is most visible to us, "established in the sky," across "the sea [and] its limit," over the "surface of God's earth." Wisdom was poured forth, begotten by God at the beginning, and as God's co-worker wisdom directed creation and found delight in the human race.

Experience and discernment

The poetry of Proverbs is meant to give us a sense of the beauty and permanence -- indeed, the eternal quality -- of wisdom. In all those attributes, wisdom is Godlike. It is also God's gift to human beings, the gift that enables them to see beyond the literal and into the deeper significance of life's events. Wisdom in many ways parallels the New Testament Holy Spirit. Wisdom is in no way equated with intellectual prowess or an accumulation of information or mere data. Instead, it is more closely associated with experience and discernment. Above all, it is a spiritual entity, not independent of thought and logic but far superior to it.

The effects of justification

In his letter to the Romans (5:1-5), Paul begins to discuss the Christian faith in Christ Jesus, and he presents

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the Christian experience in itself and explains how salvation is assured for the upright. In today's passage, the mystery of the Holy Trinity moves out of theological formulation and becomes an active ingredient, a leaven, in daily life. The first effect of justification the Christian experiences is peace; reconciliation replaces estrangement. The second effect of justification is confident hope.

Once justified, the Christian is reconciled to God and experiences a peace that distressing troubles and sufferings cannot upset, a hope that knows no disappointments, and a confidence of salvation in Jesus. The statement about hope is a typically Pauline paradox: The Christian who boasts puts the boast in something that is wholly beyond ordinary human powers -- in hope. Verse 5 contains the powerful assurance that (such) hope does not disappoint us. The Christian will never be embarrassed by a disappointed hope; implicit is a comparison with merely human hope, which can deceive. God's Spirit must direct our lives, modeling them and fashioning them on the life and words of Jesus.

Hope and Christian optimism

Verse 5 also contains the expression "God's love" -- not to be understood as our love of God, but God's love of us. Paul speaks of the love with which God moves toward us. This love is expressed through Jesus and is perpetuated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to draw us back to the love of God. Paul assures us that even suffering can enable us to endure, to develop character and to hope for victory, with Jesus as our model. The gift of the Spirit is not only the proof but also the medium of the outpouring of God's love. It signifies the divine presence to the justified.

Toward a deeper understanding

In John's Gospel (16:12-15), the disciples could not bear all that Jesus had to tell them. First they needed the assurance that only his triumph over death could bring. Three times the Spirit of truth is said to engage the Church. The Spirit will "declare" to us what is to come (v 13). The Spirit will "declare" to us what the Spirit has taken from Christ (v 14). The Spirit will take what is of Christ and "declare" it to us (v 15).

Three times the same verb is used to describe the same activity, *anaggellein*: to announce or to proclaim something again. It means that the Spirit will continue what has been realized in Christ. But the Holy Spirit will interpret it for us, will probe its deeper meaning, will make it understood in different cultures and contexts. This idea of the "revelation of the things to come" did not mean that the Paraclete could make any sort of prophetic revelations about the future, but that the Paraclete guided the community in its understanding of Jesus as the fulfillment of everything that had been promised in Scripture.

Mission and vocation

The Spirit leads the Church into truth through this ceaseless activity, through the declarative interpretation of what is of Christ, so that the experience of faith might move toward a deeper understanding of what is in Christ. This is a rich and profound concept that describes beautifully the vocation and mission of the true shepherd and priestly person: We are called to interpret the experience of faith that allows for deeper understanding and knowledge of God in the life of every person and in the life of the world.

Our mission is truly "to take what is of Christ and to declare it," to interpret it, to profess it, to tell it over and over again to the world. "To take what is of Christ" indicates a profoundly personal contact with Christ through prayer, contemplation, and study. In the Spirit, we are to bring what is of Christ to a new understanding, to a new realization in the temporal order. We are called to build a civilization of justice, love and peace based on our knowledge of and relationship to Jesus Christ.

Experiencing glory

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The increasing glory of God is this progressive revelation of the Trinity. What is the experience of glory for us? It is not euphoria, bliss or ecstasy, although those elements may indeed be present in those who have profound experiences of God's presence in their lives. When the presence and idea of God comes to dominate our consciousness and our loves, when it becomes almost palpably present with the intensity of deeper meaning and love, this is glory.

When the experience of God sustains us in the midst of excruciating pain and suffering, spiritual darkness and emptiness, crisis and confusion, we have a foretaste of God's glory. No matter what befalls us, we have a profound awareness that God is with us, that God surrounds us, protects us and holds us in the palm of his hand. St. Paul says that this is the hope for the glory in which human beings are called to exult. So great a gift of God is this that every Sunday the Church prays: "We give you thanks for your great glory."

Communication

The Trinity is communication between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the profound mystery which today's liturgy for the feast of the Holy Trinity recalls: both the unspeakable reality of God and the manner in which this mystery has been given to us. Though we may struggle with the Holy Trinity, we nevertheless take it into our very hands each time that we mark ourselves with the sign of the cross.

I conclude with this excerpt on the Trinity as Mystery from the dialogue "On Divine Providence" by St. Catherine of Siena (Cap 167, Gratiarum actio ad Trinitatem). It is used in the Roman Office of Readings for the liturgical memorial of this great saint of the Church, whose feast is celebrated each year on April 29. It is a magnificent prayer to the Trinity that we could pray each day.

"Eternal God, eternal Trinity, you have made the blood of Christ so precious through his sharing in your divine nature. You are a mystery as deep as the sea; the more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I search for you. But I can never be satisfied; what I receive will ever leave me desiring more. When you fill my soul I have an even greater hunger, and I grow more famished for your light. I desire above all to see you, the true light, as you really are.

"I have tasted and seen the depth of your mystery and the beauty of your creation with the light of my understanding. I have clothed myself with your likeness and have seen what I shall be. Eternal Father, you have given me a share in your power and the wisdom that Christ claims as his own, and your Holy Spirit has given me the desire to love you. You are my Creator, eternal Trinity, and I am your creature. You have made of me a new creation in the blood of your Son, and I know that you are moved with love at the beauty of your creation, for you have enlightened me."

[The readings for Trinity Sunday are Proverbs 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5; 2 John 16:12-15]

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Reflection for Feast of the Holy Trinity: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHL89U0-JJ4

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