

“The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit...” words from our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today from the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans - sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

One activity that many of us find meaningful is collecting items of sentimental value and placing them in a shoe box or a treasure chest, things like the baseball we caught at a Bison’s game with Dad, tickets from movies or concerts we attended with friends, newspaper clippings, cards, souvenirs, photographs, or family heirlooms. To others who look at the items in the shoe box, they are simply just items – I always wonder why Mom saved our artwork from kindergarten – but to the owner of those items, they represent a big part of our life. Opening the shoe box brings back memories of the experiences we’ve had and the people that we hold dear. It’s powerful, it’s symbolic, it’s significant, and it’s real for us. And yet, I imagine that many of us would find it difficult to explain the depth of meaning behind these items in a convincing sort of way that might suggest that despite no practical value, they are worth keeping around and not being thrown into the trash.

In some respects, trying to speak of the mystery of the Trinity is like trying to explain the value of the items in the shoe box. Although we struggle to speak of the mystery of Trinity in a secular world that has no room for God, we know how important the triune God is to our livelihood as Christians. Everything we are about revolves around God and who God is. The Trinity is in fact the central mystery of our faith. We try to explain to others that the 3 persons, Father Son and Holy Spirit in one Godhead is like the three leaf clover – there are three leaves in one clover plant; or in a somewhat scientific manner that God is like the three forms of water: solid, liquid, and gas existing as one molecule – that is ice (as in the cubes we add to mixed drinks), water (as in what we shower with), and water vapor (as in it is humid or muggy outside). We even say that that God is like Neapolitan ice cream, three flavors in one name brand goodness. Ahh, now that’s a tasty analogy that gets to my heart. You can’t have Neapolitan ice cream without having all three flavors: chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry together in one carton of ice cream: 1 ice cream, 3 co-existing flavors. But as delicious as it is, we know God is more than a clover, God is more than water, God is more than ice cream. All of these expressions fall short. Perhaps, another image that hits a little closer to the mark: God is love. If we know anything about love is that it comes down to relationships because love is not meant for itself, but rather, love can only be love once it’s given away. Love can only exist in relationship to others. And if God is love, that is, if God is perfect love from all eternity, then God must have always been in relationship: one who gives love (the Father), one who is beloved (the Son), one who is given in love (the Holy Spirit) - the Father loves the Son in the Spirit. A relationship of love!

And the best part of this relationship of love is that the love that is God is not simply contained in and of itself but has overflowed and has been given away to us. Our readings today witness to the self-gift of love to us. John's Gospel declares that everything the Father has belongs to Jesus and that when the Holy Spirit comes, Jesus will pass this along to us in truth and in glory. What is it that the Father possesses? The answer is Love, whole and entire, in and of Himself. God is literally giving himself to us, God is giving love to us. Jesus reveals that God made you and me, that he desires to save and redeem us, and that God gives us the power and the strength to enter more fully into relationship. God wants us to come into communion, into relationship with himself. We see this in every Eucharist.

Jesus admits that there is so much more to tell us, but we cannot bear it or understand it now. Indeed, it's challenging enough as it is to express the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of love; speaking of the love of God is like trying to convince others of the meaning and value of those items of happy memory that we put into our shoe boxes. Throughout the ages, many have misunderstood this love and used it to justify extremist actions, others have presumptuously taken advantage of this love to do their own thing, still others have outright rejected this love of God as irrelevant to life. We who gather here are convinced of meaning and truth of a love that is different from the world and that comes from God himself. Disciples know and have experienced, as St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans that "the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Disciples have that personal relationship with God that makes everything we hold on to as Catholic Christians worthwhile. Despite it sounding so superfluous and sentimental, like items from a shoe box, Fr. Pedro Arrupe once said, *en contrare*: "Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything." That is what happens when we are in a relationship with love – it decides everything. That personal relationship with God is a hallmark of our discipleship. That is so important, that we know and experience for ourselves that love of God; that we have encountered God; that we live and move and have our being in that relationship with God; that our relationship affects everything that we do. That is the essence of the feast that we celebrate today, the feast of God of relationships. May we all come to cherish that relationship. Each time we pray, we reach into the shoe box of our lives and proclaim that the Triune God is love and that same God loves me as we pray in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the H.S. Amen!

# The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Lectionary: 166

Reading I

Prv 8:22-31

Thus says the wisdom of God:

"The LORD possessed me, the beginning of his ways,  
the forerunner of his prodigies of long ago;  
from of old I was poured forth,  
at the first, before the earth.

When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no fountains or springs of water;  
before the mountains were settled into place,  
before the hills, I was brought forth;  
while as yet the earth and fields were not made,  
nor the first clods of the world.

"When the Lord established the heavens I was there,  
when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep;  
when he made firm the skies above,  
when he fixed fast the foundations of the earth;  
when he set for the sea its limit,  
so that the waters should not transgress his command;  
then was I beside him as his craftsman,  
and I was his delight day by day,  
playing before him all the while,  
playing on the surface of his earth;  
and I found delight in the human race."

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 8:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R (2a) O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!  
When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars which you set in place —  
What is man that you should be mindful of him,  
or the son of man that you should care for him?

R O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!  
You have made him little less than the angels,  
and crowned him with glory and honor.  
You have given him rule over the works of your hands,  
putting all things under his feet:

R O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!  
All sheep and oxen,  
yes, and the beasts of the field,  
The birds of the air, the fishes of the sea,  
and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

R O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!  
**Reading II**

Rom 5:1-5

Brothers and sisters:  
Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
through whom we have gained access by faith  
to this grace in which we stand,  
and we boast in hope of the glory of God.  
Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions,  
knowing that affliction produces endurance,  
and endurance, proven character,  
and proven character, hope,  
and hope does not disappoint,  
because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

## Alleluia

Cf. Rv 1:8

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;  
to God who is, who was, and who is to come.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

## Gospel

Jn 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.

But when he comes, the Spirit of truth,  
he will guide you to all truth.

He will not speak on his own,  
but he will speak what he hears,  
and will declare to you the things that are coming.

He will glorify me,  
because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.  
Everything that the Father has is mine;  
for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine  
and declare it to you."