

## THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

*Gospel: John 16:12-15*

Jesus said to his disciples, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

### REFLECTION 1: "STILL MANY THINGS TO SAY"

The story is told about a very rich woman who had died and how all her relatives had gathered into the solicitor's office to hear her will being read. As the solicitor began to read, the relatives sat on the edge of their seats in excited expectation, 'And being of sound mind', read the solicitor, 'nearing the end of my life, I had decided to spend all my money on myself. There should be nothing left!'

In today's Gospel (John 16: 12-15) from the Last Supper, Jesus gifts the Holy Spirit to all of us. He spent nothing on himself giving all he had to those that were there that night and to all of us down through the centuries. Part of the farewell conversation that Jesus had with his disciples at the Last Supper, was to prepare them for their future service. When Jesus announced his imminent departure from them, his followers were saddened and fearful. The bond that knit them together would unravel and they would be utterly lost and devastated. So to encourage them and to lift their drooping spirits, Jesus promised that he would send them another like himself, to be their helper, their advocate that would plead their cause and be their guide. This helper, their Comforter (Paraclete), as they would soon come to realise, was to be no other than the Spirit of Jesus himself.

You see, the full impact of Jesus' message, his messiahship, even his identity was not completely grasped by the disciples during his early ministry. 'I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now', was Jesus' comment shortly before his passion and death. Only after Jesus' resurrection and with the aid of this Spirit would the fullness of his revealed message be fully understood by his followers. As the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete would guide the disciples in the way of all truth, in other words the Spirit would guide believers in the ways of Jesus.

The evangelist John was asserting that the role of the Paraclete would be the one who would refresh in the hearts of Jesus' followers, the good news they had already received. The Paraclete would also help to interpret the revelation within the evolving community. It would be an unbroken bond with the risen Lord. Moreover the Spirit of truth acted as a shield against the errors that threatened to dilute the authentic message. Today that Spirit is no less active, no less forceful and true, as he refreshes in the hearts of fervent believers their responsibility to Jesus' mission and message. Always present with the believing community, Jesus' Spirit continually brings his light and deeper understanding to the truth of the Gospel.

In the three-dimensional experience of salvation, believers come to know the love of the Father made tangible in the person of Jesus and ever present in the activity of the Spirit. That same love is the reason for our hope and joy. Today's feast tells us not just about God, but also about the heart of our Christian living. Believing in Christ makes us one with him and brings us to the Father. It gives us his Spirit, to be the driving force of our lives.

## REFLECTION 2:

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At festivals such as Punchestown Week, magicians and con artists attract people with the famous cup and coin trick. They place a coin under one of three cups, quickly move them around, then challenge people to guess which cup has the coin underneath it. Perhaps trying to understand the Trinity is like that famous trick - if you put the Father, Son and Spirit under separate cups and then shuffle them, it won't matter what cup you pick up, because all three are always present under each cup! In the end there are no logical answers to the mystery of the Blessed Trinity - we can only approach the Trinity by faith. Perhaps this is why Jesus said in today's Gospel, 'I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now, but when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you to all truth'.

It is only by analogy that human relationships afford us an insight into the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. For instance, when the Bible describes the covenant between God and Israel, it turns to the imagery of a wedding - God is the bridegroom rejoicing over his bride. The fact that God created the world and us in the divine image and likeness is expressed well in the Book of Genesis, 'Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness' (Gen 1: 26). Or, take the analogy of marriage and the Power of Love. Husband and wife can achieve a moment of selflessness in surrendering to each other - two become one and if that union is procreative, three become one, perfect reflections of one another.

Perhaps the legend attributed to St. Patrick is the simplest of all. It is said that in explaining the Trinity, Patrick picked a bunch of shamrock and demonstrated that while having only one stem, the Oneness of God, nevertheless there are three leaves attached to the one stem, symbolising Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Today's opening prayer in the mass simplifies the point of the celebration of today's feast. That prayer addresses and praises God as Father, who so wanted to be known that Jesus became human. It recognises that we should so merit to share divine life, that the spirit lures us into union with one another and with God. Today is the feast of God's eternal outreach in love for all humanity.

As Christians we are unique among all the major religions of the world when we call on God specifically as Father, Son and Spirit. In understanding God as one, we share key elements of Jewish and Muslim faiths. The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity does not invite us into mind boggling speculation, but rather into loving appreciation. The story is told of how a Chinese man, under instruction to become a Christian, was asked how he was getting on his reply: 'Father and Son I understand, but this holy bird puzzles me!'