

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY: May 30, 2010

There is a very old and much repeated story about St. Augustine, one of the intellectual giants of the Church. He was walking by the seashore one day, attempting to conceive of an intelligible explanation for the mystery of the Trinity. As he walked along, he saw a small boy on the beach, pouring seawater with a shell into a small hole in the sand. "What are you doing, my child?" asked Augustine. "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole," the boy answered with an innocent smile. "But that is impossible, my dear child," said Augustine. The boy stood up, looked straight into the eyes of Augustine and replied, "What you are trying to do - trying to comprehend the immensity of God with your small head - is even more impossible." Then he vanished. It was an angel sent by God to teach Augustine a lesson. Later, Augustine wrote: "You see the Trinity if you see love." This means that we can understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity more readily with the heart than with our feeble mind.

The solemnity of the Holy Trinity is one of the most important feasts in the Church. The Feast of the Holy Trinity was established by Pope John XXII (d. 1334). All the official prayers of the Church, including the Holy Mass and the sacraments, begin with an address to the Holy Trinity: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We are baptized, absolved of our sins and anointed in the name of the Blessed Trinity. Throughout the world, church bells ring three times a day inviting Christians to pray to God the Father (the Provider); God the Son (the Savior); and God the Holy Spirit (the Sanctifier). We bless ourselves with the sign of the cross invoking the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we conclude our prayers glorifying the Holy Trinity, saying "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit."

In the gospel, we see Jesus' final apparition to his apostles just before his ascension into heaven. At that moment, He commissioned them to make disciples of all nations, and commanded them to baptize those who came to believe, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The development of the Trinitarian doctrine in the Church. The word "Trinity," referring to Three Persons in one God, One in divinity yet distinct in Person, is not explicitly spelt out in the Bible although the doctrine on Trinity is mentioned about forty times in the New Testament without using the term "Trinity." It was Jesus who revealed to us the three separate functions that are carried out by the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. He has told us that it is proper to attribute to God the Father the work of creation; to God the Son, the work of Redemption, and to God the Holy Spirit the work of sanctification.

We find only some hidden references to the Trinity in O.T. but we have a number of references in the New Testament.

The Annunciation (Luke 1: 26-38) describes how God the Father sent the angel Gabriel to Mary, to announce to her that God, the Holy Spirit, would "overshadow" her, and that God, the Son, would be made flesh in her womb.

During the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3: 16-17), the Holy Spirit is shown descending on Jesus in the form of a dove, while the voice of God the Father is heard from the clouds.

John (Chapters 15 through 18) presents the detailed teaching of Jesus on the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

In the preaching mission given by the risen Lord to the disciples, Jesus commands them to baptize people "*in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" (Confer also Matthew 28:19; John 10:30, 14:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14.)

The Holy Trinity is the model for Christian families: We are created in love to be a community of loving persons, just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in love. Since the day we were baptised, we have belonged to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How privileged we are to grow up in such a beautiful family! Hence let us turn to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in prayer every day. We belong to their family, the family of

the Triune God. The love, unity and joy in the relationship among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit should be the supreme model of our relationships within our Christian families. Our families become truly Christian when we live in a relationship of love with God and with others.

Additional anecdote: A good illustration of the Trinity comes from world-renowned scientist Dr. Henry Morris. He notes that the entire universe is Trinitarian by design. The universe consists of three things: matter, space, and time. Take away any one of those three and the universe would cease to exist. But each one of those is itself a trinity. Matter = mass + energy + motion.

Space = length + height + breadth. Time = past + present + future

Thus the whole universe witnesses to the character of the God who made it (cf. Psalm 19:1).