

Back when I was in seminary I returned home for my two nieces' 1<sup>st</sup> Communion. On the way there I wanted to see if they understood what it they were to receive. So I asked them, "*Can you tell something about the hypostatic union of the Blessed Trinity?*" There was a giggle then, "*Hypo what?*"

Today I am going to talk to you about the Trinity and when I get through with trying to define it, you might very well go, "*What?*" So be it, I'll give it a try.

When we baptize someone, we always do so in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not done in the name three gods, but three Divine Persons, one God in one divine nature.

To better understand this, we will need to examine the **definition of nature**. Our nature determines who we are & what we can do. **In other words, we all operate in accordance to our nature.** True? We can laugh, cry, walk, sleep, love, and so forth. However, I cannot fly, as that is not part of my nature and it would therefore be impossible. A **snake** can sleep like me, but it can't walk, as its nature makes this impossible. With that confidently deposited, let us take a look at divine nature.

**Being of divine nature**, there is no limit as to what God can do, for divinity is infinite and never bound. When we speak of the Trinity as three distinct Persons, we are not saying three **separate gods**, for that would be impossible, against the nature of God. To have three gods means that they are bound and determined within borders that make it a god, which is impossible and against God's nature for God is infinite and boundless.

**Nor** can we say of the God-head that they somehow **divide its nature**. I.e., "Okay, Jesus you take the redemption part, God the Father will take creation and the Holy Spirit will handle the love." Again, to divide would place limits and this impossible for divine nature.

**In other words, what is appropriated of one must be appropriated of all.** Take creation, for example. We say in the creed, "*We believe in One God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*" Does this imply God the Father acting in isolation, taking care of the job of creation? No, it still acts as the triune God, for all took part in creation. We might say, the Father spoke (to create) and the Word (Logos/God the Son) came and the breath of this was the Holy Spirit and then came creation - distinct, but acting as one.

It is like this. I have **an idea**. The idea is not another Patrick, but it is Patrick fully, but not as a separate person - fully me, but distinct and at the same time one.

Okay, how about this: Think of **the sun**. We have the sun, its rays and then warmth/light from the rays. We do not have three suns, but three distinctions of the one sun.

The scientist, **Dr. Henry Morris** noted that the entire universe is Trinitarian by design. The universe consists of three things: **matter, space and time**. Take away any one of these three and the universe would cease to exist. But each one of those is itself trinity: **Matter** = mass + energy + motion. **Space** = length + height + width. **Time** = past + present + future. Thus the whole universe witnesses to the character of God who made it.

Got it? Okay, if you can't grasp this, not to worry. **A Greek monk of the 4<sup>th</sup> century said this:** "*God cannot be grasped by the mind. If God could be grasped, God would not be God.*"

Why bother with all this, as it just leads to headaches. It is important because in the **Book of Genesis**: God created humanity in **God's own image**. How are we made it God's image? It can't be by our bodies, as that would limit God. The clue is found in the Trinity. It is like this.

**Rembrandt** paints a portrait of a tree. Well, that tree somewhat captures who Rembrandt is, but only slightly. Now what if Rembrandt painted *a self portrait*? Wouldn't that capture more of who Rembrandt is? God created the stuff of the world and it obviously provides some clues as to who God is. However, what if **God painted God's own self portrait**? That would more fully reflect who God is and that is exactly what God did in us – not God, but a reflection of who God is, made in God's image.

The importance of the doctrine of the Trinity lies in the fact that we are made in the image of God and to begin to understand this means we can begin to understand more of ourselves. We may not be able to understand the **what** of the Trinity, but perhaps we should try to understand the **why** of the **Trinity**. *Why* did God reveal to us this mystery, the Trinity, regarding the nature of the Supreme Being?

**\*\*An elderly couple came into a restaurant** and simply ordered one hamburger, one order of fries and one drink. When they sat down, the little old man unwrapped the plain hamburger and carefully cut it in half He placed one half in front of his wife. Then he carefully counted out the French fries, divided them in two piles and neatly placed one pile in front of his wife. He took a sip on the drink, his wife took a sip and then set the cup down between them.

As the man began to eat his few bites of hamburger, a young man, who was sitting at the adjoining table thought to himself, "*The poor old couple. All they can afford is one meal for the two of them.*" The young man then went over and politely offered to buy another meal for the old couple to eat. The old man replied that they were just fine, because they were used to **sharing everything**. However, the little old lady hadn't eaten a bite. She just sat there watching her husband eat and occasionally taking turns sipping the drink

Again the young man came over and offered to get another hamburger for them. This time the lady explained once more that they shared everything together. As the little old man finished eating and was wiping his face neatly with a napkin, the young man asked a question of the little old lady. "*Ma'am, why aren't you eating? You said that you share everything. What is it that you are waiting for?*" She answered, "**His dentures.**" What a beautiful example of a loving relationship!

**The answer to why God revealed the Trinity to us is found in loving relationship, in our sharing in this love**. In looking at the Trinity, we find a **relationship of love**. God the Father loves the Son and from that love proceeds the Holy Spirit. The Trinity tells us that God is not solitary. The Trinity says that God is **relationship**, God is **communion**. And the basis of that relationship is **love**. What makes God, God, is an **intimate relationship of love**.

**And it is in that very image that we are made**. Such an image is written in our very nature, imprinted in our neurons, coded in our brain cells, burned into the fabric of our hearts.

**We are most God-like when we are in intimate relation**, when we are in love, give love, and receive love in relationships. We are who we are because God is who God is. How we define our very selves is always in relation to another.

**When are we more God-like or happiest?** The most satisfying moments of life are typically when we are with another (You may think being in nature, alone, is most satisfying, but keep at it and before long, you will yearn for another). Mom's lap as a child, dad's hand, when we are hugged/embraced, loved, affirmed, or sitting silently in the presence of one you love. We are happiest when we are in loving relationships, when we are in trinity.

**When are we at our worse?** When rejected, divorced, sitting alone and hoping someone you know will sit with you. Perhaps it was when you ached for a hug that did not come; a phone call that did not come; when betrayed, when not picked as a child, isolated by others. The worse punishment imposed on an inmate is solitary confinement. If you raised an infant, feeding her and the like, but if you did not hold her, love her, she would die.

Yes, we are made in the image of God when we are loving and always reaching out for the other to love.

I leave you with this. The next time you see someone alone, someone isolated and lonely – *show them the Trinity.*