

A well-known preacher once said that any preacher with good sense would call in sick on Trinity Sunday. I use to have this reoccurring anxiety-filled nightmare in which I found myself taking a final exam for a course that made absolutely no sense to me. Before graduate school the course usually had something to do with mathematics but after my theology studies it usually was related to the elective I took on the Holy Trinity.

Msgr. Mike Carroll was a good teacher but I found his course on the Holy Trinity to be absolute torture. After a long semester of lectures and heavy reading I am not sure I was any closer to comprehending the mystery than I was before we had started, which in some ways was very disconcerting because the Trinity is one of the central mysteries of the Christian faith. It is the mystery that articulates and illuminates the very nature of God. And yet in other ways that elective on the Trinity was one of the best theology courses I ever took because it forced me to struggle to figure out who God is for me. And I think that struggle is so important.

I have no intention of turning my homily into a theology class today. But I would urge each of you every day to wrestle a little with the mystery of who God is for you. St. Jerome said, “The true profession of the mystery of the Trinity is to own that we do not comprehend it.” So, it is important to come to any mystery of faith with great humility. There is so much about God that our limited minds are never going to understand. But there is so much about God that we can understand and if we are going to be strong in our faith than we must be seekers; we must constantly be asking ourselves the important questions. What is my relationship to God? How does this relationship impact on the way I live my life? We are constantly told that God loves us and that he forgives us. How do I recognize this love? How do I respond to it? How does it affect my relations with people?

The great spiritual masters tell us that there is a close connection between our image of God and the way we understand ourselves and our world. Negative perceptions of God often are connected with dysfunctional self-images. For example, harsh images of God can contribute to low self-esteem. I have a good friend who grew up in a Catholic family with a harsh, judgmental father. His image of God, largely derived from his father, is of a demanding Father in heaven and it left him with low self-esteem and a fear of damnation.

Now, I know that God is so much more than simply a projection of how we've experienced our fathers. Yet, I think those of us who've had positive and loving relationships with our Dads have a leg up when it comes to knowing God. As we move towards Father's Day, next week I praise God for the love of my Dad, Daniel Joseph Ragan. His love led me ever deeper into the mystery of God's Love.

The Gospel for the feast of the Trinity shows us a wonderfully positive image of God, especially in the key verse, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Jesus, the Word made flesh, reveals a God not of wrath, but of overflowing love, a God who does not condemn the world but wills to save it. The God of love gives us the gift of eternal life, a gift that we already share as we make our journey in this world. As Christians, we name this gift the Holy Spirit, who lives within us as the source of our personal worth and community life. The Trinity is so much more than a mysterious doctrine; it is an experience of a God who loves us totally and completely.

A poet expressed this experience of who God is; this experience of the Trinity in the following words:

"Tell me what you have seen of life, of goodness, of wonder.
Tell me about the most beautiful sunrise you've ever seen,
the most beautiful flower you've ever touched,
the most delicious berry you've ever tasted,

**the most magnificent animal of the forest, sky or sea.
Tell me about the mysteries of the atom and the cosmos.
Tell me about the possibilities of science and medicine.
Tell me about the miracle of the birth of your child.
And I will tell you about the Father.**

**Tell me what you know about right and wrong,
about love, compassion and mercy, about peace and justice and integrity.
Tell me what you believe, what you value and treasure most in your heart.
Tell me about your hopes in the midst of despair, about your ability to
forgive and be forgiven.**

**Tell me what you seek on your journey through this life.
Tell me about the crosses you have had to bear
and the strength and grace you found to bear them.
Tell me about the agonies of your good Fridays
and the miracles of your Easter Sundays.
And I will tell you about the Son.**

**Tell me what you really feel passionate about,
Tell me about those you most love—
love in the deepest, most secret part of your heart.
Tell me what you are willing to die for—
and what you are hoping to live for.
And I will tell you about the Spirit.”**

**On this Holy Trinity Sunday I would urge all of you to be seekers;
prayer intensely every day. Seek to know your God and your faith
more deeply. Remain open to the Mystery of who God is for you so
that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be with you always. Amen! Amen!**