

**SYNOPSIS: Feast of the MOST HOLY TRINITY [C] (May 22)Jn
16: 12-15**

Introduction:The mystery of the most Holy Trinity is a basic doctrine of Faith in Christianity, understandable not with our heads but with our hearts. It teaches us that there are three distinct Persons in one God, sharing the same Divine Nature. Our mind cannot grasp this doctrine which teaches that $1+1+1 = 1$ and not 3. But we believe in this Mystery because Jesus who is God taught it clearly, the Evangelists recorded it, the Fathers of the Church tried to explain it and the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople defined it as a dogma of Christian Faith.

Importance in Christian life: 1) All prayers in the Church begin in the Name of the Holy Trinity and end glorifying the Trinity.

2) All Sacraments are administered (we are baptized, confirmed, anointed, our sins are forgiven and our marriage blessed and our Bishops, priests and deacons ordained) in the name of the Holy Trinity.

3) Church bells ring thrice daily, reminding us to pray to the Holy Trinity.

4) We bless ourselves, and the priest blesses us, in the name of the Holy Trinity.

Biblical proofs: There are only vague and hidden references to the Trinity in the Old Testament. But the New Testament gives clear teachings on the Holy Trinity.

1) At the Annunciation, God the Father sends His angel to Mary, God the Holy Spirit overshadows her and God the Son becomes incarnate in her womb.

2) At the baptism of Jesus, when the Son receives baptism from John the Baptist, the Father's Voice is heard and the Holy Spirit appears as a Dove.

3) At the Ascension, Jesus gives the missionary command to his disciples to baptize those who believe, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4) In John, chapters 15-18, we have a detailed account of Jesus' teaching of the role of each Person of the Holy Trinity:

a) God the Father creates and provides for His creatures.

b) God the Son redeems us and reconciles us with God.

c) God the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, strengthens us, teaches us and guides us to God.

Life messages: 1) Let us respect ourselves and others because everyone is the temple of the Holy Spirit where all the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity abide.

2) Let us have the firm conviction that the Trinitarian God abides in us, that He is the Source of our hope, courage and strength and that He is our final destination.

3) Let us practice the Trinitarian relationship of love and unity in the family relationships of father, mother and children because by Baptism we become children of God and members of God's Trinitarian family.

4) Let us practice the I-God-my neighbor vertical and horizontal Trinitarian relationship in society by loving God living in others. (Fr. Tony) L/16

HOLY TRINITY (May 22): Prv 8 : 22-31; Rom 5: 1-5; **John 16: 12-15**
(L-16)

Anecdote # 1: Simplified explanations by Ss. Patrick, Cyril and John Maria Vianney: The shamrock, a kind of clover, is a leguminous herb that grows in marshy places. St. Patrick, the missionary patron saint of Ireland, used the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity. The story goes that one day his friends asked Patrick to explain the Mystery of the Trinity. He looked at the ground and saw shamrocks growing amid the grass at his feet. He picked one up one of its trifoliate leaves and asked if it were one leaf or three. Patrick's friends couldn't answer

– the shamrock leaf looked like one but it clearly had three parts. Patrick explained to them: "The mystery of the Holy Trinity – one God in Three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - is like this, but more complex and unintelligible." St. Cyril, the teacher of the Slavs, tried to explain the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity using sun as an example. He said, "God the Father is that blazing sun. God the Son is its light and God the Holy Spirit is its heat — but there is only one sun. So there are three Persons in the Holy Trinity but God is One and indivisible." St. John Maria Vianney used to explain Holy Trinity using lighted candles and roses on the altar and water in the cruets. "The flame has color, warmth and shape. But these are expressions of one flame. Similarly the rose has color, fragrance and shape. But these are expressions of one reality, namely, rose. Water, steam and ice are three distinct expressions of one reality. In the same way one God revealed Himself to us as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit." Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQLfgaUoQCw&feature=player_detailpage

2: Trinity prayer of Tolstoy's monks: Three Russian monks lived in a faraway Island. Nobody ever went there. However, one day their bishop decided to make a pastoral visit to learn more about their religious life. But when he arrived he discerned that they did not know even the Lord's Prayer. So he spent all his time and energy teaching them the Our Father and then left them, satisfied with his pastoral visit. But when his small ship had left the island and was back in the open sea, he suddenly noticed the three hermits walking on the water – in fact they were running after the ship. When they approached it, they cried out. "Dear bishop we have forgotten the Lord's Prayer you taught us. The bishop, overwhelmed by what he was seeing and hearing asked them, "But dear brothers, how then do you pray?" They answered, "We just say, there are three of us and there are three of you, have mercy on us." The bishop, awestruck by their sanctity and simplicity said, "Go back to your island and be at peace." (Adapted from Leo Tolstoy- **The Three**

Hermits" (Russian: ТриСтарца, a [short story](#) by [Russian](#) author [Leo Tolstoy](#) (Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy), was written in 1885 and first published in 1886 in the weekly periodical [Niva](#) (*нива*).

3: "But that is impossible, my dear child:" 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 from 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 - comprehend the immensity of God with your small head - is even more impossible." Then he vanished. The child was an angel sent by God to teach Augustine a lesson. Later, Augustine wrote: "You see the Trinity if you see love." According to him, the Father is the lover, the Son is the loved one and the Holy Spirit is the personification of the very act of loving. This means that we can understand something of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity more readily with the heart than with our feeble mind. Evagrius of Pontus, a Greek monk of the 4th century who came from what is now Turkey in Asia and later lived out his vocation in Egypt, said: "God cannot be grasped by the mind. If God could be grasped, God would not be God."

Introduction: Today's feast invites us to live in the awareness of the presence of the Triune God within us: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Holy Trinity, a doctrine enunciated by the ecumenical councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, is one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and the greatest mystery of our Faith, namely, that there are Three Divine Persons, sharing the same

Divine nature in one God. “There is one God, Who has three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each Person is God, yet there is still only one God” (C.C.C. #234, #253-256). We have Father Who is the Creator, Son the Redeemer and Holy Spirit the Sanctifier and the Counselor. The doctrine of Three Persons in one God, equal in Divinity yet distinct in Person, is not explicitly spelt out in the Bible. Even the very word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible. But the doctrine of the Trinity underlies all major Christian feasts, including Christmas, the Epiphany, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension and Pentecost. 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 can 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.*” Today’s readings convey the fundamental mystery that the Triune God reaches out to people in love, seeking the deepest communion with them.

Scripture lessons: Today’s readings from Proverbs, Romans, and John are all about “pouring out.” God pours Self out in Word; God and Word pour out the Spirit to help us pour ourselves out; and the Spirit pours forth Faith and strength and character. Instead of spelling out the doctrine of Holy Trinity, today’s readings summarize the effects of the Trinity in our daily lives. The Book of Proverbs reflects on Wisdom, a quality which that book identifies with God. St. Paul, in his Letter to the Romans, teaches us that we have peace with God the Father through Jesus Christ, and that the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. In today's Gospel, Jesus, the Son of God, mentions the role of the Holy Spirit, His close relationship with God the

Father and what the Holy Spirit is going to do for us as we go about our daily tasks. God has revealed to us three separate functions that are carried out by the three Persons. 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, of reconciliation and of healing, and to the Holy Spirit, the work of guidance in truth, in the work of teaching and in the work of sanctification. As the Father, God has brought forth the created universe and even our very selves. As God's Son and our Brother, Jesus, He has made known a God Who hears our cries, Who cares, Who counts the hairs on our head and Who loves us so passionately that He became one of us, to suffer for our sins, to die that we may live. As Spirit, God remains with and within us as Paraclete: Guide, Advocate and Consoler.

Exegetical notes1) The development of the Trinitarian doctrine in the Church. The oldest doctrinal formulation of the Church's belief in the Trinity is found in the Apostles' Creed which has served both as the basis of instruction for catechumens and as the Baptismal confession of Faith since the second century. Later, the Nicene Creed, originating at the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), stated the doctrine more explicitly. This creed was introduced into our Western liturgy by the regional council of Toledo in AD 589. God has revealed to us three separate functions that are carried out by the Three Persons. 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. Our knowledge of God as Trinity is made possible *by God*, Who has chosen to reveal Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Father, God has brought forth the created universe, including our own being. As Son, Jesus has made known a God who hears our cries, who cares, who counts the hairs on our head and who loves us so passionately that He became one of us in order to suffer for our sins, and even to die for us. As Spirit, God remains with us and within us.

2) The Triune God as seen in the Old Testament: Since Yahweh, the God of Israel, was careful to protect His Chosen People from the pagan practice of worshipping several gods, the Old Testament books give only indirect and passing references to the Trinity, and the Jewish rabbis never understood them as references to the Holy Trinity. Genesis 1:26 presents God speaking to Himself: *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* Genesis 18:2 describes how Yahweh visited Abraham under the appearance of three men, an event that the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates as the "Trinitarian Experience of Abraham." In Genesis 11:7, before punishing the proud builders of the Tower of Babel, God says, *"Come, let Us go down among them and confuse their language."* These passages imply, rather than state, the doctrine of the Trinity.

3) Clear doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament.

a) 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.

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

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

d) In the preaching mission given by the risen Lord to the disciples, Jesus commanded 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).

Life messages: 1) We need to respect ourselves and respect others. Our conviction of the presence of the Triune God within us should help us to esteem ourselves as God’s holy dwelling place, to behave well in His holy presence, and to lead purer and holier lives, practicing acts of justice and charity. This Triune Presence should also encourage us to respect and honor others as "Temples of the Holy Spirit."

2) We need to be aware of God as the Source of our strength and courage. The awareness and conviction of the presence of God within us, gives us the strength to face the manifold problems of life with Christian courage. It was such a conviction that prompted the early Christian martyrs, when taken to their execution, to shout the heroic prayer of Faith from the Psalms: "The Lord of might is with us, our God is within us, and the God of Jacob is our helper" (Psalm 46).

3) We need to see the Trinity as the model for our 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. From the day of our Baptism, 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 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.

4)We are called to become more like the Triune God through all our relationships. We are made in God's image and likeness. Just as God is God only in a Trinitarian relationship, so we can be fully human only as one member of a relationship of three partners. The self needs to be in a horizontal relationship with all other people and in a vertical relationship with God. In that way our life becomes Trinitarian like that of God. Modern society follows the so-called "I-and-I" principle of unbridled individualism and the resulting consumerism. But the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity challenges us to adopt an "I-and-God-and-neighbor" principle: "I am a Christian insofar as I live in a relationship of love with God and other people." Like God the Father, we are called upon to be productive and creative persons by contributing to the building up of the fabric of our family, our Church, our community and our nation. Like God the Son, we are called upon to reconcile, to be peacemakers, to put back together that which has been broken, to restore what has been shattered. Like God the Holy Spirit, it is our task to uncover and teach truth and to dispel ignorance. (**Trinitarian spirituality**: "The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that it belongs to God's very Nature to be committed to humanity and its history, that God's Covenant with us is irrevocable, that God's face is immutably turned toward us in love, that God's presence to us is utterly reliable and constant.... Trinitarian spirituality is one of solidarity between and among persons. It is a way of living the Gospel attentive to the requirements of justice, understood as rightly ordered relationships between and among persons." *Dictionary of Spirituality*)

St. Francis Xavier's favorite prayer was: "Most Holy Trinity, Who live in me, I praise You, I worship You, I adore You and I love You." Let

the Son lead us to the Father through the Spirit, to live with the Triune God forever and ever. Amen.

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