

The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity A: May 31, 2026
“... Firmly I believe and truly, God is Three, and God is One!”

Having just concluded the Easter Season with the Feast of Pentecost, it seems that Holy Mother Church simply cannot stop Her celebrations. This week-end we celebrate the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity and next week we shall meditate, with minds and hearts aloft, on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar on the Feast of Corpus Christi. Soon we shall be celebrating the Feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. But, as we always say, this is typical life in the Church: feast or famine. And, right now, we are in the midst of extraordinary feasting. And, what shall we say about the Trinity, where to begin? Well, let's keep it simple!

How about this? Are you familiar with these following prayers and this hymn? Do we not, as Christians, begin (or, ought we *not* begin) every prayer: “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?”

And have you noticed, when we gather together as a worshipping community, either at Holy Mass or at Baptisms, or, perhaps you have joined a group of people to pray the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office), the prayers or *collects* usually end: “we ask this through Our Lord, Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.” Those prayers, by the way, are always addressed to our Father God. Thus it is that we begin our prayers invoking the Most Blessed Trinity, and we pray in a Triune fashion, addressing our prayers to the Father, through Jesus Christ (*the One Mediator*: “God is one. One also is the Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus...” {1 Timothy 2. 5} see also Hebrews 8. 6; 9. 15; 12. 24) in the Holy Spirit.

And what about our songs and our singing? One hymn, I think, that can truly be said to be an old favourite of most everyone's, is *Holy God, We Praise Thy Name*. If I remember correctly, the fourth verse gives us a perfect theology of the Trinity:

*Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, Three we name Thee;
While in essence only One, Undivided God we claim Thee;
And adoring bend the knee, While we own the Mystery.*
(1)

Although the Blessed Trinity is such a daunting Mystery to try to discuss (indeed, the *greatest Mystery of all mysteries!*) let's look at what our new *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* says since it has clear, concise answers, and, then, compare what we find in the *Compendium* with our readings in the Scripture in today's Holy Mass, OK?

So, what do we find in the *Compendium*? In short, “the central mystery of Christian faith and life is the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. Christians are baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (2)

45. Can the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity be known by the light of human reason alone? God has left some traces of His Trinitarian Being in creation and in the Old Testament but His inmost Being as the Holy Trinity is a mystery is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of the Son of God

and the sending of the Holy Spirit. The mystery was revealed by Jesus Christ and it is the source of all other mysteries.” (3)

The key word in both of the quotations I have used from the *Compendium* is, of course, the word ‘mystery.’ ‘Mystery’ is not, as many people in our society today think, an answer to a set of clues, or an end or goal one reaches following a precise roadmap. ‘Mystery,’ in the sense that the Church uses the word, is a reality more in the sense of a Quest in which one seeks an Encounter with a Person (as in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, that is, the Eucharist) or, when we are Baptized or speaking of the Blessed Trinity, a communion (*communio*) of Persons. In this sense, we can use an expression of C. S. Lewis, in his last volume of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, when the children, not yet aware that they were ascending into Heaven, but doing so all the same, heard the Christ figure, Aslan, call to them, saying: “Come further in! Come further up!” (4)

Notice that the definition points out that the Lord God left “traces of His Trinitarian Being in creation.” To what does that refer? Simply what we have discussed over and over: “Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our own likeness...” (Genesis 1. 26) Our Jewish fathers of old, who fought and died to preserve the Truth which had been given to them: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord, thy God, is One!” (Deuteronomy 6. 4) in the depths of their being, from the beginning of the Bible throughout the Old Testament sensed that this One God was somehow more... that is, “Let Us make man after Our own image...” But, as the definition points out, this mystery is inaccessible, that is, beyond reason alone; it requires the coming of Christ, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and, hence, the Trinity shows Itself to be the “source of all other mysteries.”

46. What did Jesus Christ reveal to us about the mystery of the Father?

Jesus Christ revealed to us that God is ‘Father,’ not only insofar as He created the universe and the mankind, but above all because He eternally generated in His bosom the Son Who is His Word, ‘the radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of His nature.’ (Hebrews 1. 3)

47. Who is the Holy Spirit revealed to us by Jesus Christ?

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity. He is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son. He ‘proceeds from the Father’ (St. John 15. 26) Who is the principle without a principle and the origin of all Trinitarian life. He proceeds also from the Son... by the eternal Gift which the Father makes of Him to the Son. Sent by the Father and the Incarnate Son, the Holy Spirit guides the Church ‘to know all Truth.’ (St. John 16. 13) (5)

You may be thinking that, if this is the simpler definition of the Blessed Trinity, what must the more difficult ones be like? Don't feel bad! I remember a class I had to take on the Holy Trinity which was a total disaster. Why? Because none of us prayed! So, let's get some help from some of our saints!

We learn from St. Athanasius (+ 373), one of our ancient and great Doctors of the Church that

... in the Church, one God is preached, one God Who is *above all things and through all things and in all things*. God is *above all things* as Father, for He is principle and source; He is *through all things* through the Word; and He is *in all things* in the Holy Spirit. (6)

Now, stop and think for just a moment. Does something sound familiar in that definition? God is “*above all things... through all things... in all things...?*” Do we not address our prayers in the Mass to our Heavenly Father, and then end those prayers, saying, “we ask this through Our Lord, Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You (that is, the Father) in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.?”

What is happening, perhaps without our noticing, is a *distinction* being made between *Person* in the Trinity and *Substance* or *Nature*. In simplest, bare-bones language, ‘nature’ refers to ‘what’ God is, and since God is one, the Lord has only one ‘nature’ or ‘substance.’ ‘Person’ refers to ‘Who’ God is: since we are dealing with the Blessed Trinity we are dealing with Three Divine Persons (three Divine ‘Whos’) sharing one Divine Nature (‘what’). Thus, whatever makes God to be God, that is, (according to the philosophers): God is One, He is Truth, He is Beauty, He is Being. These qualities or attributes are shared equally by the members of the Blessed Trinity.

Then what can we say about the Persons? Well, if we take what we learned from the *Compendium* #46 that “Jesus Christ revealed to us that God is ‘Father’” and, from # 47, that “the Father is the principle without a principle” that is, the source or “origin of all Trinitarian life,” we have learned two essential points (7), mainly, that Jesus came to this world to reveal the Father to us as a Loving Person, as a Father, not simply as a nameless God; and, that the Father Whom the Son reveals to us, is the origin of the Trinity. We say that the Son proceeds from the Father. Yet, mysteriously, because the individual Persons share the same nature, that is, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, though the Father is the origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit, they are all co-equal and co-eternal. The Holy Spirit, as we read in the *Compendium* # 47, “proceeds also from the Son... by the eternal Gift which the Father makes of Him to the Son. Sent by the Father and the Incarnate Son, the Holy Spirit guides the Church ‘to know all Truth.’”

(St. John 16. 13) (8) And now, we have learned a third point, and that is, that the Holy Spirit, the “Gift” of the Father and the Son, and Who is sent by the Father and the Son, leads us “to know all Truth.” (St. John 16. 13)

Referring to last week’s readings and homily, “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 *Corinthians* 12. 3) But the proclamation of Jesus as Lord is much deeper than we possibly ever expected if we take what we have learned from the *Compendium* and compare those answers to the Gospel: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life in Him.” (St. John 3. 16)

Belief and life – these two things are, in Jesus Christ, forever linked together in the very Blood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit brings us to Jesus so that, in coming to Christ and His Cross, in proclaiming Jesus as Lord of our lives, we find ourselves, perhaps without even realizing it, inching, slowly but surely, to our Heavenly Father.

Like Moses in the Book of Exodus, we climb the mountain of the Altar of God, and what do we find? Some people might look for a god... of what? Vague promises and spirituality? Wealth, fame, comfort? Who knows? We climb, whether we realize it or no, for one thing, *for One Person, and really, for Three*, and like Moses we encounter *Mystery*: “*The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity!*” (*Exodus* 34. 6)

Our God, as the hymn we quoted above, says, is “in essence,” that is, in nature or substance, “only one,” and thus, “undivided God we claim Thee.” Yet, this One God, is Three Persons, and so, “Three, we name Thee.” Thus it is entirely fitting that “And adoring we bend the knee, while we own the Mystery!” (9) The more we search for answers, the more we are shrouded in Mystery – that is the way with these things, most especially with the greatest of all Mysteries, the Most Blessed Trinity. As we said early on, quoting Lewis, to find the Lord, we enter the Mystery of God, and continue the Quest going “further up and further in” allowing the Sacraments to take us from this world to Heaven. One of the great priest scholars of our diocese, Fr. Anthony Farrell once said, in the Eucharist, we “make bread that is not bread and wine that is not wine, rending time and space on an altar of stone with a cup and plate of gold!” And to Whom is this Sacrifice offered? To the thrice-Holy Triune God. With that in mind, let me leave you with the words of the St. John Cardinal Newman (+ 1890). These words I leave you with are from his great poem, *The Dream of Gerontius*. They are the words of a man (an old man – hence, the Latin: gerontius) on his deathbed, begging mercy from the Thrice-Holy God:

Firmly I believe and truly God is Three, and God is One;
And I next acknowledge duly, Manhood taken by the Son.
And I trust and hope most fully, in that Manhood crucified;
And each thought and deed unruly, do to death, as He has died.
Simply to His grace and wholly Light and Life and Strength belong,
And I love, supremely, solely, Him the holy, Him the Strong.

1. *Holy God, We Praise Thy Name*, Words: Ignaz Franz; Music: Te Deum, *Katholisches Gesangbuch*
2. *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, USCCB, Washington, D.C., 2006, # 44, pg. 19
3. *Ibid.*, # 45, pg. 19
4. C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, vol. 7 of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, HarperTrophy, 1994, pg. 197
5. *Compendium*, op.cit., # 46 & # 47, pg. 20
6. St. Athanasius, Office of Matins, Feast of the Most Holy Trinity
7. *Compendium*, op. cit., # 47, pg. 20
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Holy God, We Praise Thy Name*
10. His Eminence, St. John Cardinal Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius*