

Trinity reveals inexhaustible mystery

By Father Albert Shamon
Catholic Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 16:12-15; (R1) Proverbs 8:22-31; (R2) Romans 5:1-5.

The great revelation of the Old Testament was monotheism: God is one!

The pagans reasoned that a one God was an alone God, an alone God was a lonely God, and a lonely God was an unhappy God. Therefore, few pagans ever converted to Judaism; instead they peopled their temples with gods and goddesses. Plato asked the monotheists, "If your God has a mind, whom did He know; if he has a will, whom did He love?"

No answer was ever given to Plato's query until the coming of Christ. With

Jesus came the great revelation of the New Testament: that of the Most Holy Trinity. God is one; but in that one God are three Persons; a Father who is life eternal; a Son or Word of God who is truth unfathomable; and a Holy Spirit who is love ineffable. Life, truth and love are the least common denominators of happiness.

So Christianity's answer to the pagans is that the one God is not alone — sour, dour, lonely, like a Buddha contemplating his navel for all eternity. He is a community of loving Persons, brimming over with life, love and truth, and so, inexpressibly happy forever and ever.

Let us put it simply. A divine Person is a distinct divine reality. The Father from all eternity thinks. As our thinking ends in a

thought, so God's eternal thinking ends in a thought. Our thought is distinct from the thinker; so is God's eternal thought distinct from the thinker, God the Father. Our thoughts are only intellectual images of reality. But God's thought is a divine reality. A distinct divine reality is a Person.

We express our thoughts by words, so Scripture speaks of God's eternal thought as the Word or Wisdom of God. And since everything we make first exists in our minds, so Scripture attributes the works of creation to the Mind or Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word ... All things came to be through him" (John 1:1,3).

Because the thinker begets his thought, the eternal Thinker is also called Father and His eternal Thought "Son." "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30) — "are" because Father and Son are distinct Persons; "one" because they possess the same divine nature.

Now the Father sees His Son, the perfect image of Himself, and He loves Him. The Son sees the Father as the source of all goodness, and He loves His Father. Love is something between two, so it is distinct from the lover and the beloved. Love also gives; lovers give themselves to each other in marriage. Divine love, too, gives itself. So again we have a distinct divine reality — a divine Person.

Since love does not express itself in words, but as Shakespeare said, in sighs, and since the Latin word for a breath or a sigh is *spiritus*, we call the eternal love of Father and Son the "Spirit" of God — but the "Holy" Spirit because this love is not sensual.

The mystery of the Trinity lies not in how three Persons can be one God — that is no mystery. A jumbo jet can have three pilots. The mystery is in the processions:



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

how can the Son proceed from the Father and the Holy Spirit from Father and Son, and yet all three be equal? That is the mystery.

A little boy came home from religion class. His dad asked him what he had learned. He said, "I learned about the Trinity. How there are three Persons in one God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and all of them are equal."

His father retorted, "That is silly, my boy. I'm your father and you are my son. We're not equal; I existed before you."

The boy thought a moment and replied, "But, daddy, you weren't a father until I became your son."

A mystery is a truth we cannot fully exhaust. It tells us much, but we can't drink the well dry. One reason for a mystery is that it gives us an opportunity to make an act of faith. Paradise was lost through a lack of faith.

Another reason is that it tells us how we ought to live. We were made to emulate the triune God. God is a community of loving Persons. We should be also. First, the family, then society. To this end, the Holy Spirit has been given to us. "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (R2). Why?

Our Lady answered that beautifully at Medjugorje: "I give you my love, so that you may give it to others." But first you must accept it by fervent participation in the Mass and by responding to Mary's request for the rosary and fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Jesus' quiet miracle rescues proud father from humiliation

By Cindy Bassett
Catholic Courier columnist

"Today must be the happiest day of Samuel's life, with his son marrying Rebecca," one of the servants remarked to another as they prepared the food.

"There hasn't been a wedding in Cana for three years," the other servant replied. "It seems as though every person in town as well as everyone from the nearby villages has turned out for this one."

"Samuel is a respected man, and I suppose many of these people have come to honor him as well as his son on this important day," the first servant observed. "The problem is that if this celebration goes on much longer, the wine is going to run out."

"What's to be done?" the other servant wondered. "That would be great cause for embarrassment for Samuel."

"Excuse me, I couldn't help but overhear," said a woman standing nearby. "Perhaps my son can help."

The woman didn't wait for a reply, but left the two servants and went out to the main room where the celebration was taking place.

"Who is she?" the first servant asked.

"Her name is Mary, and she is a distant cousin of Samuel's wife," the other servant answered. "But Jesus, her son, is a carpenter. What can he possibly do?"

In a few minutes, Mary returned with Jesus. "My son will help you," she said. "Do whatever he tells you."

There was something gentle and at the same time commanding about the carpenter's presence. The two servants rushed to follow his instructions. Neither of them hesitated when he told them to fill the six stone pots with common water from the well. Something extraordinary was about to occur. They could feel it.



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As soon as they had accomplished this, Jesus asked one more thing of them: "Draw out some from the pot and take it to the chief wine steward to taste." Then Jesus left them as quietly as he had come.

The chief wine steward knew at once that something had happened, even if he was unaware of the cause. He brought Samuel back with him immediately.

"Could it be that the wine was somehow mixed up in the confusion of the banquet preparations?" Samuel asked. Then seeing the flustered servants, he added, "No, I think not. Today, everything is in capable hands."

"I haven't tasted such wine in many years," the wine steward said, smiling. "Usually such a wine is used at the beginning of a celebration. Later on, when people have had their fill, it is customary to bring out the more common stuff."

"Not to worry," Samuel said to all three of them. "It is time to make a toast to my son and his new wife. I invite you all to have a glass of this fine wine."

The two servants raised their glasses with everyone else that day. Both of them scanned the room until they found Jesus in the crowd. Just for a brief moment, they caught his eye and he smiled at them in recognition.

Scripture reference: John 2:1-11.
Meditation: "Give yourself to the Lord; trust in him, and he will help you." (Psalm 37:5).

Retreat for life, peace set for this weekend

The Faith and Resistance Community — which is made up of priests, religious and lay people — will hold a "pilgrimage for life and for peace" May 19 and 20 at the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard.

The retreat will feature activists from around the country. Father Daniel Berrigan, SJ, who has become renowned for his writings, activism and ministry to the dying, will be the featured speaker.

Marcia Timmel and Cathryn Holderread Passmore will also speak during the two-day retreat. Timmel, of Olive Branch Catholic Worker Community in Washington, D.C., is also a Plowshares and pro-life activist.

Passmore is a pro-life film producer and a member of the Mennonite Central Committee in Oregon.

Participants will have the opportunity to

take part in demonstrations at the Seneca Army Depot in Romulus, and at a clinic where abortions are performed in the Rochester area.

All are welcome to attend the retreat, which begins at 9 a.m. on May 19 and concludes around 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 20. Overnight accommodations will be provided at the Genesee College Interfaith Center, 11 Franklin St. The center is located about one mile from the main abbey entrance off of Rt. 63 South.

Call Father Dan O'Shea, 716/243-2220; Father Anthony Mugavero, 458-7846; or Jan Bezila, 244-7439, for information.

Sisters' memorial planned

A memorial Mass for School Sisters of Notre Dame M. Helen Schonart and M. Bertille Busch will be celebrated Tuesday, May 23, at 5:30 p.m. in St. Philip Neri Church, 1776 Clifford Ave., Rochester.

All are welcome to pay tribute to the sisters, who taught at Holy Redeemer, St. Michael and Holy Family parishes.

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