

# The Holy Trinity

Proverbs 8:22-31

Psalm 8

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15

There is always a temptation to take for granted the things that our ancestors had to fight for, which is the reason why we have celebrations remembering their struggles and honoring the gifts they won for us. Memorial Day is an example. Every year, we set aside a special day to remember the men and women in our Armed Forces who have given their lives in order for us to enjoy freedom and peace. Our celebration of Memorial Day reminds us not to take for granted our freedom and liberties. Similarly, our celebration of the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity invites us to remember the men and women who gave their lives for our faith.

In the Early Church, the biggest enemy to the faith was the Roman Empire, which for three centuries tried to eradicate Christianity through violent persecution. The Church, however, survived this attack and eventually Catholicism became the Empire's most prominent religion. When that happened, a whole new enemy emerged, this time *within* the Church. That enemy was heresy. In order to combat this new enemy, the Church held many councils to discuss and defend the most important tenets of our faith, tenets that we still profess today in the creed.

One of the most famous defenders of our faith was Saint Athanasius, a fourth-century bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. He fought against the Arian heresy, which denied Christ's divinity, an idea that would also negate the theology of the Trinity. While this heresy threatened the theology of the Trinity for more than 100 years, Saint Athanasius served as an anchor for the Truth. He suffered for his support of the Divinity of Christ and the unity of the Trinity. He was imprisoned, slandered, and exiled five times. He endured all of these things in order to keep intact the subtle theological distinctions that you and I often take for granted today.

The greatest way we can honor those men and women who made great sacrifices in order that we might be who we are today, is by appreciating and savoring what they suffered and died for. Here are a few ways we might honor our ancestor in the faith and savor the reality of the Trinity:

1. The Colloquy. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, in his Spiritual Exercises, recommends using a triple colloquy during prayer. In this triple colloquy, he recommends that we take whatever subject we are meditating on in prayer and share it in a specific way with the Blessed Virgin Mary, then with Jesus, and then with the Father.
  - a. For our celebration of the Trinity, we could do something similar and reverence the three distinct Persons of the Trinity by sharing the same subject with each of them individually during prayer. Interestingly, what we will realize is that there are nuanced differences in how we understand a particular subject depending on which Person of the Trinity we conversing with.
  - b. For example, if the most significant spiritual movement in a man's life right now is his desire to grow in love, then he could talk with each Person of the Trinity and look at Love from each of their perspectives. What does it mean for the Father—the Creator—to love? What story from Sacred Scripture stands out as the most significant regarding Jesus' love? When was the last time the man experienced the Holy Spirit's loving presence?

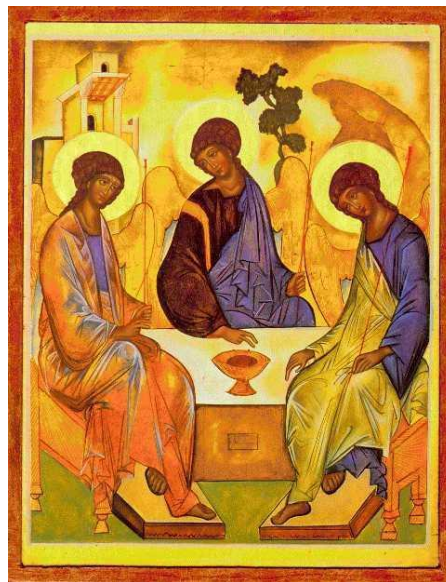
2. Reading about the Trinity and Meditating on it. Another way we could reverence the gift we've been given in the Holy Trinity is to read and learn more about the theology and/or spirituality of the Trinity and to meditate on it, to let it be the subject matter for our prayerful conversation with God. Here is an excerpt from the book, Abiding in the Indwelling Trinity, by George A. Maloney, that you might want to use for meditation—

God the Father, in absolute silence, in a communication of love impossible for us human beings to understand, speaks his one eternal Word through his Spirit of Love. In that one Word, the Father is perfectly present, totally self-giving to his Son. "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9). But in his Spirit, the Father also hears his Word come back to him in a perfect, eternal "yes" of total, surrendering love that is again the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is reciprocal community of a movement of the Spirit of Love between the Father and the Son. Our weak minds cannot fathom the peace and joy, the ardent excitement and exuberant self-surrender that flow in a reposeful motion between Father and Son through the silent Holy Spirit. God becomes real only because he can communicate in love through his Word. His Word gives him his identity as Father. But that means eternal self-giving to the Other, his Word in Love, the Holy Spirit.

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3. Meditate on an Icon of the Trinity. There are numerous icons and images of the Trinity, including the one in our church. While no image can capture the essence of the Holy Trinity, they can give us some great "food for prayer." One particular image that provides some wonder meditation material is the ancient icon of the Trinity below. In this image, God is shown as three persons, gathered around a table, sharing bread. In a beautiful way, this icon invites us to reflect on the Trinity's sharing with one another and with us, especially in the Eucharist!



Let us pray that we will never take for granted the gifts that have been given to us through the sacrifice and love of those who have gone before us!