

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I. Concept of Trinity

A. A friend of mine posted on Facebook the other day asking people to post their names for the Trinity.

1. Of course there was Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

2. But some of the other names were:

Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, or Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer

- Another suggested, Source, Guide, Goal—perhaps better,
Source, Goal, and Guide

3. An expansion on that is: Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love.

4. Some of these images of the Trinity reflect a more feminine side of God, such as:

- Mother, Child, and Counselor,
- or Mother, Friend, and Comforter
- or Maiden, Mother and Crone

5. Some images express a more visual image, for instance:

- Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love
- The roots, the branches, and leaves
- One person, quoting Emily Dickenson, suggested, “The bee, the butterfly, and the breeze.”

6. All of these are names trying to get at the UNITY of God as expressed in different ways.

B. This UNITY has been expressed in different examples as well.

1. Of course, there is Patrick's famous example with the **Shamrock** demonstrating how God could be ONE thing made up of three parts.

2. Other examples include a **candle**, with the wick, the wax, and the flame – each playing its own part yet working together to make a candle.

- Or Neapolitan ice cream.

3. Another example is a musical chord—Brett—three notes that work together to create something beyond themselves in the chord.

4. Again, all of these are examples of trying to get at the UNITY of God working in different ways, yet always being God.

II. Trinity of Relationship

A. I think what all of this is trying to point out is that, in reality, the Trinity is a *relationship of God*.

1. There's another Facebook post, I put it on the St. Columba's page if you want to see it, that shows the actor "The Rock" driving a cab talking with a young woman in the back seat.

2. The Rock says, "I've studied the Trinity, but I still don't understand it.

- And the woman in the backseat replies, "You're not supposed to. It's a mystery."

- The Rock responds with [Shocked face].

- And then, after being told you're not supposed to understand the Trinity—36 people responded to the original post, trying to explain the Trinity – [Rock Face]

3. Like The Rock, like those 36 people, at one time or another, we all find ourselves trying to definitively figure out the Holy Trinity—but it can't be done.

4. As one commentator pointed out, "The Doctrine of the Trinity is one of the great mysteries of faith in which we attempt to understand the manifold aspects of God working in our lives and in the world." [Synthesis]

B. In a way, that's what **Nicodemus** is trying to do in our Gospel reading this morning.

1. **Nicodemus** comes to Jesus seeking the truth of Jesus' teachings—essentially seeking the answer to that age-old question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

2. And Jesus tells him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

- Other translations say, “born again.”

3. And **Nicodemus** gets stuck—he can't get past the literal image of being born again, or from above, and can't understand what Jesus is telling him.

4. What Jesus is saying is that it's not the signs and wonders that make a difference; the important thing is a change in a person's inner life that could only be described as new birth.

5. As one Scholar puts it, “*Thus through this dialogue with Nicodemus, we learn that God, as Father, offers us boundless love.*

- *God the Son is the one who came down from heaven; through him we have eternal life.*

- *And finally, God the Holy Spirit infuses our lives in mysterious and surprising ways.*” [Synthesis 2018]

6. Which brings us back to where we started with the concept of the Holy Trinity.

III. Living the Trinity

A. The concept of the Trinity gives us language to describe how God works in our lives.

1. As Saint Paul points out in our NT lesson, “*all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*”

2. And we have a choice—we can live “according to the flesh” as Paul says, or we can live as “children of God.”

3. The difference is how we live our lives—whether or not we are open to the gift of God’s Spirit.

4. God has given us the gift of the Spirit, and, by adoption, we become children of God and are transformed as we live into and are shaped by the values of God’s Kingdom.

5. How we live into this gift makes all the difference.

B. The mystery of the Trinity is a mystery of God’s inner life.

1. Yet, the Divine life does not turn inward but outward.

2. The whole concept of the Trinity reveals to us that God is community.

3. The power of that Divine Community seeks us and, by love, draws us into the Divine life—into the heart of God.

4. Like **Nicodemus**, we are called to know the Trinity—one in three, three in one—not by explaining the mystery but by praising, loving, and serving the God who comes as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

5. Let me say that once again, we are called to know the Trinity—one in three, three in one—not by explaining the mystery but by praising, loving, and serving the God who comes as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

6. It is in and through our actions that the doctrine of the Trinity and the God to whom it points will be truly known and made known.

Let Us Pray

Enfolding God, Trinity of love, you are our source, our goal, our life; may we be born again in your no more to live alone and unconnected, but sharing in the Spirit’s breath and carried to your heart; through Jesus Christ, who lifts us up. AMEN. (Shakespeare p. 61)