

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Rev 1:8

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
to God who is, who was, and who is to come.

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 28:16-20; L165B

The eleven disciples went to Galilee,
to the mountain to which Jesus
had ordered them.

When they all saw him, they
worshiped, but they doubted.

Then Jesus approached and said to
them,

“All power in heaven and on earth
has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all
nations,

baptizing them in the name of the
Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit,

teaching them to observe all that I
have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always, until
the end of the age.”

Reflecting on the Gospel

We have all heard of the shamrock, which, according to legend, was used by St. Patrick to represent the Holy Trinity to the native Irish in the early fifth century. Three leaves on one sprig, representing three persons in one God. That story has been repeated countless times, and the image of the shamrock has become forever linked with the Trinity, and with the Irish. But, of course, God is more than a sprig, and the relationship between the persons of the Trinity is more

complex and subtle than three leaves. Earlier church fathers

used the image of the sun to speak of the Trinity, with the sun itself representing the Father, the light representing the Son, and the heat representing the Spirit. This image does more than the shamrock to convey the subtlety at work in such a sophisticated concept of “three persons, one God.” But still, the metaphor of the sun with its light and heat is still just that, a metaphor.

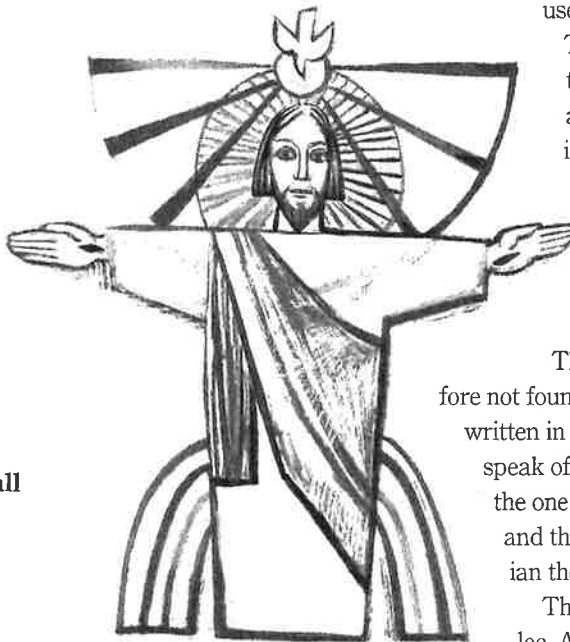
Though *trinitas* is a Latin word and therefore not found in the New Testament, which was written in Greek, there are many “triadic” texts that speak of Father/God, Son, Spirit. Passages like the one for today would be considered “triadic,” and they would give rise to full-blown trinitarian theology in later centuries.

The gospel scene is after Easter, but in Galilee. According to Matthew, this is the first and only appearance of the risen Jesus to his disciples (only eleven now in a somber reminder of

Judas’s fate). Still, the disciples doubt. They receive the command that has been referred to as “the Great Commandment”: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, / baptizing them in the name of the Father, / and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The Gospel of Matthew, which restricted the use of the term disciple to the Twelve during Jesus’ ministry, now shows that following the resurrection, there will be disciples in all nations. Matthew’s baptismal formula for making a disciple is the same as what Christians use today. Based on this “Great Commandment,” Christianity has become a worldwide religion. From a mountaintop in Galilee, those initial disciples made other disciples by baptism, who made still more disciples by baptism, and so on, until our very day. Discipleship founded on baptism into the life of the Trinity is much more powerful than a shamrock, or even the sun.

Living the Paschal Mystery

When questioned about the Trinity, many catechists or others resort to, “It’s a mystery. We can’t understand it.” While that may be true, it doesn’t mean we don’t think about it. A mystery of faith is in some ways similar to the mystery of the universe. We plumb its depths. We examine it from various angles. We ask questions. We discuss. We debate. And we find that we have not exhausted the topic; rather, it has exhausted us. And we return to it again later, learning more with each engagement. Dismissing any consideration of the Trinity solely because it is a mystery does us a disservice as rational yet faith-filled Chris-



tians. Many theologians have sought to express various aspects of this mystery through the centuries, and many more will continue to do so into the future.

Part of our living the mystery is to know that we will never fully comprehend or understand all of what it means for God to be a Trinity. In the same manner, we will never fully comprehend or understand the entirety of the universe. But we can approach each mystery with humility and a sense of wonder and respect. Jesus is the incarnate God. He called God Father, and promised to send the Spirit who would remind his disciples about Jesus. Each of us has been baptized into the life of the Trinity and will continue to let that meaning unfold each day of our ongoing lives.

Focusing the Gospel

Matt 28:16-20

Ordinary Time resumes with the solemnity of the Holy Trinity. The feast originated in France in the eighth century and was adopted by the universal church in 1334. The solemnity focuses on the essence of our faith: the revelation of God as Father, the perfection of his creation in Jesus the Son, the fullness of the love of God poured out on us in the Holy Spirit.

By tradition, today's gospel takes place at the mount of the ascension, even though Matthew does not tell the story of the ascension. The risen Jesus commissions his fledgling church to teach and baptize in the name of the Holy One who reveals himself as Father, Son, and Spirit. In the Trinity we find our identity as the people of God.

Focusing the First Reading

Deut 4:32-34, 39-40

Moses reminds Israel during their exodus journey that God is first encountered in God's act of creation, and then in God's redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian captivity and leading them to nationhood in the exodus. In today's first reading, from the book of Deuteronomy (the "law book" of the Torah), Moses exhorts the Israelites to remain faithful to the commandments on which their covenant with God is established.

Focusing the Responsorial Psalm

Ps 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22 (12b)

Psalm 33 praises God who put all of creation into motion by his Word. The verses selected for today's responsorial psalm mirror Moses' exhortation (first reading) that God creates and maintains all life, including and especially humankind, to reflect his vision of justice and kindness.

Focusing the Second Reading

Rom 8:14-17

The Spirit of God is that unique love that exists between God the Father and God the Son. In that same Spirit, God "adopts" us as his own, enabling us to cry out to God as "Father" and to one another as brothers and sisters, children of the same God.

PROMPTS FOR HOMILISTS, CATECHISTS, AND RCIA TEAMS

How have you experienced the presence of God in the ordinary and every day? How would you explain this presence to nonbelievers?

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What are the implications for society if God is not just Creator but "Father"?

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How can we "teach" others about God without the use of theological language or jargon?

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