

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. 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.



Reflecting on the Gospel

Dance is rhythmic movement of the body. Most often we dance to music. We are delighted to dance with another (or even others). Most couples in love choose to dance. We dance at weddings. Some cultures dance at funerals. It is touching to observe even very young children begin to sway and stomp their feet to the beat of music in their own child-dance. Dance brings delight, communicates, is expressive of an inner life.

While we usually don't think of the three Persons of the Trinity as being for all eternity in a love-dance, a Greek term in theology actually tries to capture this. The term is *perichoresis*. It refers to the inner-penetration of the three divine Persons with one another. God, however, is not static but dynamic, is the source of all life, is undiminished love. We can well imagine that God's delight in the divine Self and in we humans made in the divine image spills over in an eternal love-dance. *Perichoresis* is the music of God's heart evident in the delight of creation.

The Holy Trinity desires that we humans participate in this love-dance. We are destined to be with God now and forever. God chose to create and redeem humanity in an unequalled act of love. The readings this Sunday remind us that God is gracious, sharing divine Life with us: "God so loved" us that God "gave his only Son" so that "the world might be saved" (gospel). Yes, God sent the Son so that we might have Life. Divine Life and love extend beyond the inner intimacy of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity to us in an eternal, shared love-dance drawing us toward a fuller share in God. This is salvation: a share in God, in God's Life, in the divine *perichoresis*.

The mystery of the Trinity calls us to go both beyond ourselves and deeper into ourselves—to an intimacy with God that delights us and brings us to share that delight with others. Thus is the trinitarian grace, love, and fellowship manifested in our midst. God is triune mystery, yes! But even more mystery-laden is that God shares divine Self with us in such a gracious manner and "receives us" as God's very own.

This gospel posits three possible life-outcomes: might not perish, might have eternal Life, might be saved. These outcomes are why the Father sent the Son. The Spirit empowers us to receive God's love, to believe in the Son, and to yearn for divine Life. But we must *choose* to believe. Do we? We must *choose* to dance. Do we?

Living the Paschal Mystery

It is awesome to think that God invites us to share in such a great mystery as the Life of the Holy Trinity! It seems as though God's graciousness never ends—not only with sending the Son, but further with inviting us into the divine *perichoresis*. In this context of shared Life and love we might think of the simple, ordinary ways we reach out to others—a smile, a helping hand, a kind word—as ways we actually manifest the mystery and majesty of our triune God. Such love as this can only be matched by those who share in divine Life! We are to be in relationship with each other as the three divine Persons of the Holy Trinity are in relationship with each other. This sounds impossible to us humans who experience hurts, broken relationships, lack of graciousness so much of the time. Perhaps this is why the mystery of the Holy Trinity has been revealed to us: as God's beloved who have been saved by the Son and given Life in the Spirit, as those created in God's image, as those who dance with delighted hearts.

Gospel

John 3:16-18; L164A

God so loved the world that he gave his
only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him
might not perish

but might have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the
world to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved
through him.

Whoever believes in him will not be
condemned,

but whoever does not believe has
already been condemned,

because he has not believed in the
name of the only Son of God.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: God so loved the world, might not perish, might have eternal life, might be saved, Whoever believes

To the point: This gospel posits three possible life-outcomes: might not perish, might have eternal Life, might be saved. These outcomes are why the Father sent the Son. The Spirit empowers us to receive God's love, to believe in the Son, and to yearn for divine Life. But we must *choose* to believe. Do we? How?

Connecting the Gospel

to the second reading: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" assures that we "might be saved." The "love of God" is the Father's gift of "his only Son." The "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" binds us into a community of believers seeking eternal Life.

to experience: The doctrine of the Holy Trinity for most people is an abstract, mysterious concept. These readings challenge us to move from a doctrinal concept to an experience of the Trinity as a community of Persons who love us into eternal Life.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Daniel 3:52-56 is an addition (included in Roman Catholic but not Jewish or Protestant versions of the Old Testament) to the story of the three men thrown into the fiery furnace because they would not worship the Babylonian gods. The verses are part of a lengthy song of praise sung by the men as they moved about in the furnace, untouched by the flames. When King Nebuchadnezzar peered inside he was amazed to see that they were alive and unharmed, and that a fourth "person" walked among them. He immediately released them, declaring their God mighty above all others.

The readings and gospel tell us that God reveals divine might not through displays of power but through acts of love. Without limit, God offers us mercy, kindness, patience, and peace. Even more, God gives us "his only Son" so that we might have fullness of life. What better response can we make than "Blessed are you . . . praiseworthy and glorious above all" (psalm).

to psalmist preparation: An excellent preparation for leading this canticle would be to use part of it (e.g., "Blessed are you, God!" or "Glory and praise to you, God!") as a personal prayer every day this week. Sing it as you rise each morning, as you see new spring life pushing up from the ground, as you look upon the face of a loved one, as you share a meal. Sing it wherever you see pain eased, forgiveness given, hope rekindled. You will be celebrating the God in whom you believe and the assembly will hear this in your singing on Sunday.

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- I experience God's love and Presence when . . . This helps me love and be present to others in that . . .
- I experience God as a loving trinity of Persons when . . .
- What helps me choose to believe in the Son and his saving mission is . . .

PRESIDERS

My ministry manifests "the love of God" when I . . . It promotes "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" by . . .

DEACONS

When I love those whom I serve as God loves me, I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My manner of greeting those who gather for liturgy helps them receive God's love when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

I experience "grace . . . love . . . fellowship" (second reading) with other music ministers when . . . I contribute to this behavior when I . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My serving witnesses to God's gracious and loving desire for eternal Life for us when . . .

LECTORS

My proclamation manifests that I believe in the Son God has sent when I . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

When I distribute Holy Communion, I participate in God's giving of the Son to those who believe by . . .