

# Trinity Sunday 2020

## Father, Son and Holy Ghost

1 Peter 1:1-12

St. Andrew's – Jacksonville, OR — By Fr. Bill Baker

*“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”*

This second verse of our first lesson is one of many places in scripture where we see a reference directed to God in Trinity. And today, Trinity Sunday is a time set aside to contemplate such a difficult dogma of the church. To get as close to comprehending the Trinitarian concept of God as we dare, we must first put away the three-leaf clovers and any other such analogies, for they all fall short and can lead to theological distortions. While the three-leaf clover has been a very popular depiction of a trinity, its shortcoming is easy to spot. Three leaves connected by a stem, separate but one. Up to this point a Trinitarian concept seems plausible. But if I were to cut one leaf from the stem the other two would remain unharmed and could carry on. Not so and not possible with the Holy Trinity that is God. The unity between Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a unity so tightly knit that there is no separation between persons and no independence in operations but one will without disagreement or contradiction. Gregory of Nanzianzus was a fourth century Archbishop of Constantinople who when speaking of the Holy Trinity said, *“When I say ‘God,’ I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”* Gregory goes on to say that, *“there are no analogies in the world around us that adequately convey the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.”*

So, the three persons of the Trinity, the three persons of the Godhead are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and are of the same divine substance, indwelling one another equally...occupying the same divine space in an inseparable unity. Yet the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit, nor is the Son the Father or the Holy Spirit and neither is the Holy Spirit the Father or the Son. There is nothing in natural law that can claim such a mystery as can the divine Trinity of God.

There is another term we must be familiar with in our present age. The term signifies 'right teaching'; you know it by the word Orthodox. This is important because many modern day churches will refer to God as 'God' or 'Lord' but seldom speak of God in Trinity. "Opposition to the orthodox doctrine (of the Trinity) has often tended to come from those who stress the Bible at the expense of the teachings of the church. These people forget that the church was forced to use extrabiblical language because biblical language itself was open to a variety of interpretations – some faithful, others not" (Robert Letham "The Holy Trinity" pg.5). So, to avoid heresy, the Early Church Fathers came together through the centuries agreeing that there is one God in three persons of one essence maintaining the mystery that is God in Trinity.

Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, also identifies God in what will later be termed the Holy Trinity; *"There are diversities of gifts (he says), but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all"* (1 Cor. 12:4-6). In this we learn that every true gift and ministry is a manifestation of the Holy Trinity!

This was the understanding from the very beginning after the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and we see the significance of this understanding in Peter's first epistle to his brethren throughout the known world, *"...elect (Peter begins) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..."* It is Jesus Christ who is the embodiment and power of God the Father and the wisdom of God the Holy Spirit. The fullness of God is found in the power, the selfless love and eternal commitment of the Father... the fullness of God is found in the power, the selfless love and eternal commitment of the Son... and the fullness of God is found in the power, the selfless love and eternal commitment of the Holy Spirit.

In the Holy Trinity we see God as the Father, the source of all that is seen and unseen. The Prophet Isaiah, when speaking as the Lord God our Father, says, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:8-9). In the Father are the eternal past and the

eternal future, beyond our understanding and beyond our ability to comprehend. If we plucked off the leaves of the Son and the Holy Spirit it would not be possible for redemption. All would be without understanding and the way to God would be hid eternally.

It is in the eternal Son that the way to the Father has been made known. In the incarnation, God in the second person of the Trinity, added to himself, our humanity that we may be justified and redeemed by a one time propitiation and sacrifice for the sins that keep us from eternal life. Jesus is the love of God that came down and the Word of God that removes the scales from our eyes. But Christ, in his humanity, could not walk the earth eternally...he is fully divine yes, he is fully God yes, but he is also fully human and to pay sins penalty Jesus must overcome death. And so Jesus goes the distance, accepting all that our sins have to offer: jeerings, mockeries, beatings, denials...and finally death. But then Jesus overcomes death as evidenced by his resurrection and our union, through Jesus, to the Godhead is made complete in the Ascension! Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father. Father and Son together in the realm of heaven.

Let's be thankful that that is not the end of God's work on our behalf. We are body and soul after all and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's indwelling God's people is a grand gift of grace and mercy beholding us as the sons and daughters of God Almighty. In the Apocraphal book of Wisdom we read concerning the Holy Spirit, *"O send her out of thy holy heavens, and from the throne of thy Glory, that being present she may labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto thee. For she knoweth and understandeth all things, and she shall lead me soberly in my doings, and preserve me in her Dower. And thy counsel who hath known, except thou give wisdom, and send thy Holy Spirit from above? For so the ways of them which lived on the earth were reformed, and men were taught the things that are pleasing unto thee, and were saved through wisdom"* (Wisdom 9:10-11, 17-18). When Christ knocks upon our hearts and we open the door through baptism, confirmation and Holy Communion, it is the Holy Spirit...Godly wisdom, which enters in uniting us in Christ and therefore to the Father...we have become the recipients of the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

By the totality of the inseparable Holy Trinity we are Sanctified! The Holy Trinity is the heart, soul and basic doctrine of Christianity. Three but one, one yet three; there is no denying the necessity of God's fullness found in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, is the power of the Father and the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and in Christ Jesus so are you. Amen.