

HOMILY - TRINITY SUNDAY YEAR A

“God is Intimate Relationship”

(Exodus 34:4-6, 8-9; Daniel 3; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Jn 3:16-18)

Recently, I was privileged to tour a Hindu temple in Chennai, India, with a brother Oblate. Made of solid rock 1,500 years before Christ, this ornate structure towered pyramid-like at least twelve stories into the heavens. It and the devotional activity within its bowels, spoke strongly of humanity’s age-old quest to communicate with the deities, to communicate with God.

Trinity Sunday flips that around and speaks of how God communicated with us: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Today, we are invited to put our total faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so that we can enjoy even now that eternal life that our Triune God wants to share with us.

All of the world’s great religions, as well as the more primitive religions, can be seen as humanity’s attempts to connect with a spiritual power in the heavens. The Muslims speak of God as Allah, who is a majestic absolute master. The Hindu religion seeks to arrive at Nirvana, an experience of nothingness. The Buddhist’s strive for Detachment as a final goal. The First Nations of our own country speak of a Creator who is Great Spirit. The Twelve Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous speaks of a Higher Power. The Judaism of Jesus’ time and even today speaks of Yahweh, or rather, uses only consonants to indicate Yahweh, preferring not to even use that name out of reverence.

Within this context of humanity wanting to reach up to God, the first reading presents us with a significant high point in the theology of Judaism. Moses is a great Prophet, a friend of God, one we are told conversed with God in person. In this story, Moses asks to see God’s face. God responds by telling him that no one can see the face of God and live. God’s energy is too over-powering for a human to experience. However, God tells Moses that he will pass before him, and Moses will see God from behind. Thus even Moses, the great Law-giver, the dispenser of the Torah, can only catch a glimpse of God from behind, so to speak. Such is the limitation of even Judaism.

Turning to the gospel now, we find Nicodemus, a high-ranking Jew, an elder, well versed in the teachings and tenets of the Jewish faith, conversing with Jesus. Though steeped in Judaism, he is restless; thirsting for more; searching; inquisitive; questioning. He comes to visit Jesus by night, for fear of his contemporaries, looking for answers to his unrest.

He has come to the right person, for in Jesus we do not have someone who like Moses only glimpses God. We have someone who in himself is God, is with the Father and the Father is in him. In Jesus Nicodemus found someone who constantly sees the Father’s face; who is always with the Father, and who can reveal to him who the Father is.

The answer Jesus gives Nicodemus points to the intervention of God in the history of the world, the sending of God’s own Son, who alone can give the fullness of life through belief in him. The Father, who is love, sent his own Son out of love for the world, to redeem and heal the world, through the

power of the Holy Spirit who raised him up from the dead.

The second reading puts our belief in the Trinity, our relational God, in liturgical form: the grace or power of the Lord Jesus Christ; the love of God the Father, and the communion or presence of the Holy Spirit, is with us, is with all those who believe that the Father sent the Son among us.

Our task is simply to respond in faith and love. We are to believe in Jesus, the Son of God, and keep his commandment to love one another as he has loved us. We are invited to enter into a life-giving communion with our loving God who is relationship, family, intimacy.

Recently on a trip overseas I sat next to a young Hindu computer programmer. We entered into a lively conversation that was really a rich experience of inter-religious dialogue. Here was my first opportunity to learn about Hinduism from someone who grew up with it. He shared with me his experience of the way his family lived out their Hindu faith; the temples they frequented; the number of gods that they worshipped and to whom they offered sacrifices and offerings.

When I asked him what kind of a relationship he had with these various gods, he admitted that the concept of a relationship with these gods wasn't really much of a factor. They were just there when they were needed, as objects of petitionary prayer for the most part. He himself rarely prayed except when he had some urgent need.

I then shared with him my experience of living my own faith in a Triune God, who was for me very personal, a God who was Trinity, family, intimate relationship, and how my relationship with this relational God helped me be reconciled with my Father, and helped me to live life to the full. I was filled with joy, peace and excitement as I shared all this with him. It was an invigorating experience that I believe left this young Hindu computer programmer something to think about. Had I perhaps even evangelized someone? The thought was there.

Some years back I was visiting a friend when his fifteen year old daughter came back from a soccer tournament. She burst into the house, dropped her bag on the floor, flopped on her dad's lap, put her arm around his neck, and nestled her head against his for at least a minute, soaking up his love. He carried on with our conversation as if this was totally normal and expected. The other kids did not even notice, and his wife continued preparing supper. This *was* normal in this household. I caught my breath and observed with awe this intimate father-daughter relationship. This might be as close to a picture of heaven as I will see on this earth, I thought to myself, and felt so grateful for what I was seeing – a living out of the words of Jesus in today's gospel.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now gathers us in the name of the Trinity. We celebrate God's love revealed in Jesus and made present through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we are empowered by that same Spirit to go out to proclaim that love to the whole world.

So, to enjoy even now the eternal life that Jesus speaks about, let us put our complete faith in him who reveals God as relationship, family, even intimacy.