

Holy Trinity Sunday- Year A (June 7th, 2020)

The dogma of the Trinity has not always been clearly defined. In fact, the word “trinity” does not appear in Holy Scripture. It is not even clear how the doctrine was understood in the time of the apostles. The oldest doctrinal formulation of the Church’s belief in the Trinity is in the Apostle’s Creed which served as the basis of instruction for those joining the Church and as a baptismal confession of faith since the second century.⁸

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

These verses come from the account of the remaking of the tablets of the Commandments after the first set had been broken by Moses in anger at the creation of the golden calf.⁶ In atonement for that sin Moses ground up the golden calf to powder and poured it into water which he made the people drink (Ex 32:20). Then he had the Levites slay with the sword about 3000 of the people who had been partaking in the revelry before the statue.⁸ It is this sin of turning away from God to an idol that gives significance to the rest of this passage.⁶

4bEarly in the morning Moses went up Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him, taking along the two stone tablets. These are two new blank stone tablets that Moses made at God’s command in anticipation of having God write another set of the Ten Commandments.(Ex 34:1)

5Having come down in a cloud, This is the same way that the Lord appeared to Moses in Chapter 19 before He gave him the first set of Commandments. Clouds are a common sign of the appearance of God especially in the Old Testament where he led the Israelites with a pillar of cloud by day but even in the New Testament the voice of God came from a cloud at the Transfiguration, Jesus was taken up in a cloud at the Ascension and he predicted that he will come again upon the clouds of heaven. Those living at the time of the parousia will be taken up upon the clouds to meet the Lord.¹ **the Lord stood with Moses there and proclaimed his name, “Lord.”** The giving of his name to Moses is the beginning of God’s self revelation.⁶ Out of respect for the holiness of God, the people of Israel do not pronounce the name of God. In the reading of Sacred Scripture, the revealed name (Yahweh) is replaced by the divine title: “Lord”. It is under this title that the divinity of Jesus will be acclaimed: “Jesus is Lord.”³ (CCC 209)

6Thus the Lord passed before him and cried out, This seems to be the Lord who is proclaiming and defining Himself as he promised he would in 33:19 when he said “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord’.” **“The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.”** This is the central revelation that the chosen people turn to whenever they have sinned for here they find strength and the motive for returning to the Lord. Here they are reminded of what He had exactly revealed about Himself and it motivates them to beseech his forgiveness.²

8Moses at once bowed down to the ground in worship. To worship God means to pay Him honor, homage, reverence, and respect. He does not need this, but we benefit by acknowledging that God is all and that we are his creatures. This is the response of Moses: first he humbly prostrates himself in the presence of the Almighty God and then he prays for the people.

9Then he said, “If I find favor with you, O Lord, do come along in our company. When God had recalled his covenant with Abraham, he had relented in his punishment but had said that he would no longer accompany the people but would send an angel to lead them (Ex.33:2-3) Here Moses is interceding and asking God to accompany them. God relents in Ex. 33:15-17.⁸ **This is indeed a stiff-necked people;** This means that they are stubborn, self willed, and unwilling to submit in

obedience to God's will. **yet pardon our wickedness and sins, and receive us as your own.**" This prayer of Moses on behalf of the people makes three requests which sum up many earlier petitions: 1) he begs God to stay with the people and protect them in their hazardous journeying in the desert, 2) he asks God to forgive the very grave sin they have committed, and 3) he implores God to make the Israelites his own property, thereby distinguishing them from all other peoples and restoring them to their status as "his own possession." These three requests are ones that were constantly on the lips of the people of Israel.²

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

This is the most intensely personal, passionate, and intimate of all Paul's letters. Between the time Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians and the time of this second letter, false teachers had turned the Corinthian Christians against him. These false teachers denied Paul's authority as an apostle and preached "another Jesus", another religion, another gospel.¹¹ Verses 1-10 are St. Paul's final appeal to the community at Corinth to correct the evils within it through an examination of its conscience so that he won't have to take severe action against them. This is his farewell and the conclusion to the letter.

11Brothers and sisters, rejoice. This is a call to be cheerful! Joy is something very characteristic of Christians because their awareness of being children of God tells them that they are in the hands of God, who knows everything and can do everything. Therefore, we should never be sad; on the contrary: we should go out into the world to be sowers of peace and joy through everything we say and do.⁴ **Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.** IF you live in peace, THEN the God of love and peace will be with you!! St. John Chrysostom comments on this verse that God is a God of love and a God of peace and in these he takes his delight. It is love that will give you peace and remove every evil from your church.⁴

12Greet one another with a holy kiss. This kiss on each cheek is a gesture of affection and Christian brotherhood. It is a common expression of hospitality in the Near East, equivalent to a friendly handshake in the modern Western world.⁹ Tertullian wrote that "the kiss of peace is the seal of prayer."⁴ What we know as the "sign of peace" was a "kiss of peace" in the earliest communities.¹⁰ **All the holy ones greet you.** These are the Christians of Macedonia, from where St. Paul is writing.⁴ **13The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.** Paul explicitly wishes everything necessary for the Corinthians' salvation.⁸ This is one of the earliest and clearest expressions of faith in the Trinity found in the New Testament. It has been used for centuries as a liturgical benediction⁹ and it is one of the opening greetings that may be used during our celebration of the Eucharist.⁶

John 3:16-18

This whole selection is a direct quotation of the words of Jesus Christ to Nicodemus, one of the leading Pharisees, a member of the Sanhedrin, who went to Jesus under cover of darkness because he could not risk open association with him. We know very little of Nicodemus except that he did speak in the council on behalf of Jesus and he took part in his burial, bringing a large and costly quantity of spices.¹

16God so loved the world Note that God is motivated by Love! All of our religion is a revelation of God's kindness, mercy and love for us. At the Easter Vigil, the Roman Missal points out: "How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he gained so great a Redeemer."⁷ **that he gave his**

only Son, so that everyone who believes This word can't be reduced to just a mental acceptance. The word *believe* in biblical times carried with it the concept of obedience and reliance. The opposite (antonym) of the word that is translated here as *believe* is "disobey." This verse actually means that whoever has the mental acceptance of Jesus AND shows this by being obedient to his commands, might not perish but might have eternal life!⁵ **in him might not perish** There are just two choices: either perish or have eternal life, that is, choose hell or heaven. **but might have eternal life.** It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that a person who has been incorporated into the Church but who does not persevere in charity is not saved.³(CCC 837)

17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. No one is freed from sin by himself or by his own efforts. All have need of Christ who is the model, master, liberator, savior and giver of life.⁷

18Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, God does not condemn those who do not believe, but their own refusal to believe, to accept the good news of God's love for the world, prevents them from embracing salvation.⁶ **because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.** By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love.³ (CCC 679)

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (2) "The Navarre Bible: Pentateuch," (3) "The Catechism of the Catholic Church," (4) "The Navarre Bible: Corinthians," (5) "Studies And Writings" by Steve Ray, (6) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers" by Lawrence E. Mick, (7) "The Navarre Bible: St. John," (8) The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology Online founded by Dr. Scott Hahn, (9) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (10) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers" by Martin Connell, and (11) "You Can Understand The Bible" by Peter Kreeft.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.