

Homily – Matthew 28: 16-20
Trinity Sunday
29/30 May, 2021 Riverstown / Sooeey

‘**The Three Hermits**’ is a short story by the Russian author Leo Tolstoy written in 1885 and here is an adapted version of the story.

Three Russian monks lived in a faraway Island. Nobody ever went there. However, one day their Bishop decided to make a pastoral visit to learn more about their religious life. But when he arrived he discerned that they did not know even the *Lord’s Prayer*. So, he spent all his time and energy teaching them the ‘Our Father’ and then he left them, feeling satisfied with his pastoral visit. But when his small ship had left the island and was back in the open sea, he suddenly noticed the three hermits walking on the water – in fact they were running after the ship. And when they approached it, they cried out, “Dear Bishop we have forgotten the *Lord’s Prayer*. The Bishop, ‘overwhelmed by what he was seeing and hearing’ asked them, “But dear brothers, how then do you pray?” They answered, “We just say, there are three of us and there are three of you, have mercy on us.” The Bishop, awestruck by their simplicity said, “Go back to your island and be at peace.”

Well! Today we celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity: a mystery of God Himself. And this mystery teaches us that there are three distinct Persons in one God, sharing the same Divine Nature: co-equal and co-eternal.

Our faith as Catholics tells us that the Church itself is a fruit of the Trinity. The Church is called: “the gift of God the Father, the body of Christ the Son, and the fellowship in the Spirit”. And the mission of a Christian is to take everything to the Father, through Christ the Son, in the Spirit.

Now, what about the central mystery of the Church which is celebrated in the community, ‘the Eucharist’? There are three Greek words which express the Trinitarian aspects of the Eucharist. First of all, it is the *Eucharistia*, ‘thanksgiving to the Father’. And how do we give thanks to the Father? *Anamnesis*: that is, recalling what the Son has done. And, we do it through the power of the Spirit: *Epiclesis*. So the mystery of the Eucharist is seen in Trinitarian terms.

And then we have all the creeds, starting from the simplest creed, ‘the sign of the Cross’, and then the more elaborate ones: ‘the Apostles’ creed and the Nicene Creed’. All these would go to tell us that we do

not believe in God as an abstract reality, but we believe in God who is Father, Son and Spirit.

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland had a very powerful way to explain the Trinity to his people. The story as all of you know goes thus that one day his friends asked Patrick to explain the Mystery of the Trinity. He looked at the ground and saw the shamrocks growing amid the grass and he picked one with its trifoliate leaves and asked if it were one leaf or three. Patrick's friends couldn't answer. The shamrock leaf looked like one, but it clearly had three parts. Patrick then explained to them: “The mystery of the Holy Trinity – one God in Three Persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - is like this, but more complex and incomprehensible”.

Now, this mystery can be spelt out in very simple terms: “God is one and ‘this one God’, is ‘Father, Son and Spirit’”. And far from being a speculative mystery, the Trinity is the mystery of salvation. God has a plan of salvation for us. The Father is God for us, the Son is God with us, and the Spirit is God in us. So, it is a mystery of love through which God is telling us: “He is the God who saves us, ‘the Abba’. He is the God who becomes one like us, ‘the Emmanuel’ and He is the God who dwells within us, ‘the Spirit’”.

So the Trinity is a mystery of salvation: a wonderful mystery which the Church has been trying to articulate. It will always remain a mystery and we will never be able to exhaust it.

And you have that famous example about St. Augustine, of how he was wandering along the sea shore and then at a certain moment he saw a little boy trying to scoop water into a little hole in the sand and he asked the child: "What are you doing, my child?" And the child replied with an innocent smile: "I am trying to put the ocean in this hole". "But that is impossible, my dear child," said Augustine. The boy stood up, looked straight into his eyes and replied, "If you think you can comprehend the Trinity and explain the Trinity, I can do this." Then he vanished.

So, the Trinity remains always a mystery, but a mystery of love. God is not revealing some abstruse Mathematical problems to us how he is one and three. But God is telling us: "He is the God who saves, the *Abba*. He is the God who becomes one like us, the *Emmanuel* and He is the God who dwells within us, the *Spirit*."

It would mean that we are called to live this Trinitarian mystery. And we live it by building up the kingdom of God as children of the Father '*Abba*', by imitating the

second person *'the Son'* as disciples of Christ, and by remaining open to the workings of *the Spirit* within us.

Let me conclude my homily with a little anecdote: A monk was once asked by a group of pilgrims to help them find God. "Where is God", they asked. The monk just shook his head and replied: "No one can help you find where God is". And to their question "why", the monk said: "Well! God is everywhere. It is almost like asking a fish where the ocean is. You can't ask that, because it is in it". And then the monk went on to say: "that is how we are with the Lord. We are immersed in God's love".

And this love, dear friends, can embrace all of humanity. And God invites us today to share in the pain and the struggles of our neighbor in order to bring His infinite love into their lives. And that is the discipleship to which each and every one of us is called.

And on this feast day, let us join St. Richard of Chichester and pray on our knees: "Dear Lord, 'of Thee, three things I pray: To see Thee more clearly, To Love Thee more dearly, and To follow Thee more nearly day by day, **Amen**".

