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## Man in the Trinity

### Introduction

1. Trinity is the great mystery of our faith.
2. Story of St. Augustine on the beach.
3. We're called here not to have a theology class on the Blessed Trinity, but to focus on how we, as Christian men, can enter into a deeper loving Communion with our Triune God.
4. Beginning on the day of Baptism and provided we remain in the state of grace, there's an indwelling of the Blessed Trinity within our souls. That's not a static presence. He is within us in order to move us.
5. Jesus told us about this reality on Holy Thursday, which we find in St. John's Gospel:
  - a. John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him
  - b. John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. . . . 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. . . 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.
6. We maintain this reality provided that we live in the Lord's word, that we keep his commandments, that we keep our communion with the Lord.
7. In this talk, I would like to spend our time trying to nourish our understanding of the persons of the Trinity.
8. Many times we can relate only to one of the persons of the Trinity, rather than to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I'd like to begin with our interactions with each.

### Interaction with the Father

1. Jesus came to reveal to us the face of the Father.
2. The greatest image he gave us is in Lk 15. Prodigal Son. He is the Father of Mercies.
3. We need to relate to him in this way. To receive his mercy. To recognize our need for it. To come to receive it.
  - a. Confession is this great encounter.
  - b. All three persons of the Blessed Trinity are involved, but in a special way there's the influence of God the Father. Formula of absolution focuses on Father's role in sending first his Son and then the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins.
4. Then we need to share it.
  - a. Jesus calls us to become perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, to be merciful as he is merciful.
  - b. With this we're certainly not going to become God. The work of our perfection is not done fundamentally by us but by God.
  - c. But we are called to seek to be perfect in mercy as he is.
  - d. Need to forgive others.
  - e. Need to look out for reconciliation always.
  - f. In the family this is particularly important.

- i. Couples start keeping score of their wounds. It affects the present. Story of couple coming to see me where she remembered the time he returned at 3 am 19 years before.
    - ii. Need to be merciful to kids, especially when kids make mistakes.
    - iii. I'm convinced one of the reasons why many young people reject what they think the faith is is because they reject the way that parents live it. They can grow to think of God as the great "punisher," who, like their parents, grounds them, yells at them, and much more.
    - iv. For many young kids — and I saw this as a high school chaplain in particular — their notion of the Church is not the great place of mercy, but of nuns rapping knuckles, of priests talking about sins, about nos, rather than about God's love and mercy.
    - v. We need to transmit that at home.
  - g. For us as men, we need to get beyond the caricature that to be merciful is to be soft, to lower our principles, to be indulgent. Not at all. To be merciful is to be strong, strong enough that even though you could punish, even though a person deserves it, you yourself render the justice.
5. Overflowing goodness and generativity
- a. The Father eternally gives of himself in generation.
  - b. We are called to see in ourselves an image of our Father. Like Father, like Son.
  - c. Then we're called to reflect it, to give life.
  - d. How do we look toward children. Do we wish to cooperate with him in bringing children into the world. It's not just about us and our particular situation. It's about heaven.
6. Provider
- a. Accept his provisions, especially the graces.
  - b. Be generous in caring for others.
7. Protector
- a. Ask for his help to be freed from the evil one.
  - b. Protect others, especially from spiritual harms.
8. Jesus taught us how to communicate with the Father.
- a. In the Our Father, he didn't give us so much a formula as a series of items to ask for in the proper order.
  - b. Our — focus on family. To look at others as real siblings beloved by the Father. We're more related to others by baptism than we are to our siblings through blood.
  - c. Heaven — We wish to go home. To some degree, we are far from home, but we're called to make that ascent back to the Father's house.
  - d. Hallowed by thy Name — We do name him. But we also try to make it holy through our actions, giving glory to our Father in heaven.
  - e. Thy Kingdom Come — Jesus' whole mission was to announce that the Kingdom was at hand and to show us how to enter.
  - f. Thy Will Be Done — Just like Jesus in the Garden, with love and trust, we acknowledge that we wish to do the Father's will more than our own, recognizing that this is the means to our fulfillment in this world and the next.
  - g. Our Daily Bread — We ask him for what we really need. We don't ask him for money. We don't ask him for tomorrow. We ask him for today's necessities.
  - h. Forgive us our trespasses as we have forgiven — Each day we trespass. Each day we have that pilgrimage back to his house.
  - i. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil — We recognize our vulnerabilities, that but for his grace, we could commit any and all sins, and we ask for his grace so that we may remain his faithful sons.

### **Interaction with the Son**

1. Of the three persons of the Most Blessed Trinity, relating to Jesus is probably the easiest for most of us.

- a. One fundamental reason for it is that he took on our nature and, like the Letter to the Hebrews says, he has undergone everything we have but never sinned.
  - b. But we also know more about him than any of the other persons, so, even though we need to grapple with the mystery of the hypostatic union of his humanity and his divinity, there is less mystery associated with him than with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
2. How do we relate to the Lord? “Follow me”
- a. Jesus never once said merely “do as I say” but always “follow me.”
  - b. He never asks us to do what he is unwilling to do.
  - c. He washes feet and says explicitly, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him
  - d. He tells us what the greatest love is — to lay down one’s life for one’s friends, something he would do the following afternoon — and then says, “Love one another as I have loved you.”
  - e. In the celebration of the Mass, he tells us to “Do this in memory of me,” which refers not just to our celebrating the Eucharist around the apostles, their successors and priests collaborating with them, but also to live a Eucharistic life, saying “this is my body, this is my blood, given for you.”
  - f. He challenges us constantly to live up to his example.
  - g. In the beatitudes, he shows us his face and calls us to reflect it:
    - i. He who is poor in spirit, who mourns over the lost sheep, who is meek and humble of heart, who hungered and thirsted for God’s justice, who was pure of heart, a peacemaker and who suffered persecution for the sake of righteousness.
    - ii. This is the path to happiness, in contrast to the world, but he shows us the way.
  - h. When he gives us the conditions for our being his disciples — to put him above family, to put him above property, money, to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow him, he is not asking us to do anything he himself has not done.
  - i. In this Pauline Year, we can call to mind how St. Paul followed the Lord, to the point of having the world crucified to him and him to the world. It was that experience of intimately following the Lord Jesus that led him to experience the profoundest union: “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.”
  - j. Jesus calls us to imitate his love for the Father, to imitate his intimacy, to imitate his prayer.
  - k. He not only gives us the good example but preaches to us about his example and tells us to walk in his footsteps, knowing that if he has in fact done this, then he will give us the graces we’ll need to do so.
3. “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” Acrostic.
- a. “Christ”
    - i. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit of the Father, a spirit of wisdom, understanding, courage, prudence, knowledge, reverence and fear of the world, anointed to proclaim good tidings to the poor, release to prisoners, return of sight to the blind and a year of favor to the Lord.
    - ii. He shows us how to live out our anointed state. We’ve been anointed by the Spirit of God with similar gifts and Jesus indicates to us the path to keep that life alive. We’ll have a chance to talk more about this in the section on the Holy Spirit.
  - b. “Son of God”
    - i. Jesus is uniquely the eternal Son of the Father.
    - ii. But he shows us how to live out our divine filiation. Through baptism we have become sons of God and our identity is grounded in this central reality.
    - iii. St. Josemaria, “Abba, Pater!” on a train car in Madrid. The basic reality of our Christian identity.
    - iv. Scriptural passages

- a. John 1:12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become **children of God**;
- b. Rom 8:4 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
- c. Rom 8:21 the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved.
- d. Phil. 2:14 Do all things without grumbling or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain
- e. 1John 3:1 See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.
- f. Gal. 3:26 for in Christ Jesus you are all **sons of God**, through faith.
- g. 1John 5:2 By this we know that we love the **children of God**, when we love God and obey his commandments.
- v. In a world in which many fathers have not been there for their kids, and therefore in many ways don’t really know how to trust in, obey and love a Father, Jesus shows us the path.
  - a. His prayers all start to turning to the Father.
  - b. He didn’t see obedience as a limit on his freedom but the purpose of his freedom.
  - c. He came to reveal the Father’s love and our dignity as beloved children of the Father.
- vi. Many people today lack self-esteem because they forget their dignity as God’s beloved kids, created by him out of an act of love, held in existence by him out of love, and called to an eternal communion out of love.
- c. “Savior”
  - i. Jesus not only saved our lives when we were dying, but gave his life to save us from dying.
  - ii. He died to free us from death.
  - iii. If he loved us this much, then that must influence the way we interpret everything else he tells and asks us. Everything he does for us — including the challenging stuff, including the commandments we might find least pleasant, including loving our enemies, praying for our persecutors, turning the other cheek, are par of this love.
  - iv. It also leads to a life of gratitude.

### **Interaction with the Holy Spirit**

1. Except for those who have shared in the Charismatic renewal, this is probably the most neglected aspect of the Trinitarian life.
2. Scene in Ephesus with St. Paul

Acts 19:1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

3. Many Catholics live their life as if they barely know that there is a Holy Spirit.
4. One of the great fruits of the charismatic movement has been to bring to the whole Church a more vital participation in the gift of the Holy Spirit.
5. Pope John Paul II, in his theology of the body, stressed that the path toward our appropriating the fruits of the redemption, what he, after St. Paul called, the “redemption of the body,” occurs through “Living According to the Holy Spirit.” There were two paths. Allow the HS to pray in us, to teach us how to pray, to teach us how to relate to the Father, to remember all that Jesus taught us, not just mentally to in our own actions, to form us into other Christs.
6. What life according to the spirit consists of.
  - a. Rom. 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law — indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
  - b. There is a tension in man’s interiority or heart between two elements present from man’s beginning, which, after sin, oppose each other, between body and spirit. Paul uses “flesh” to coincide with the Johannine threefold lust, which often wins against the Spirit. “Flesh” refers in Paul to the man who is “interiorly” subjected to the “world,” its secularism and sensualism. The Spirit wants the opposite of what the flesh wants. Life according to the Spirit is a synthesis and program.
  - c. In Romans 8:5-10, this distinction between flesh and spirit is phrased in terms of justification. One who lives according to the Spirit sets the mind on the things of the Spirit, and Christ is alive in them. Paul returns to the first sin and its legacy of death, while anticipating the final victory of Christ over sin and death. This victory will give life to our mortal bodies through the indwelling Spirit. This justification is a real power operating in man that is revealed in actions. This power enables justice “to abound” in man.
7. Life of the Spirit is real freedom; life of the flesh kills the Spirit (mortal)
  - a. In St. Paul’s list of works of the flesh, he lists specifically carnal sins (fornication, impurity, licentiousness, drunkenness, carousing) as well as “sensual” sins (idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy). These are sins of the “spirit of man” coming from each of the three-fold lusts.
  - b. For St. Paul, following Christ, real purity comes from man’s heart and concerns more than the sexual. As he writes to Titus, “To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds ...” (Tit 1:15 f.). There is the call to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit in order to live (Rom 8:12-13). This is the same appeal Christ made to the human heart to control its desires. This is the indispensable condition to life according to the Spirit, which is the antithesis of death.
  - c. Life according to the flesh, by contrast, involves the death of the Spirit. This is what is meant by a “mortal” sin. This is why St. Paul says those who do the works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom (Gal 5:21). Life according to the Spirit is true freedom to love our neighbor (Gal 5:13-14). Man obtains justification in “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6), from the “Spirit.” Paul appeals to them to free themselves from a “carnal” exterior concept of justification for freedom in Christ. We understand purity of heart in this way.

8. There are different fruits for each.
  - a. The contrast between life of the flesh and of the spirit is seen in the works or fruits of each (Gal 5:19-23). This is a contrast between the threefold lust and the ethos of redemption, which is the Spirit operating in man. Behind the fruits of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control — there is moral virtue, choice, the effort of the will, and the help of the Spirit against three-fold lust. They are more “fruit” of the Spirit’s action than the “work” of man. Self-control is particularly important to our reflections.
  - b. Fruits of Spirit: Gal. 5:22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
  - c. Works of flesh: Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.
9. Call to purity of heart: “God’s will is our sanctification, in which we abstain from unchastity and control our body in holiness and honor (1Thes4:3-5).
  - a. In 1 Thess 4:3-5, Paul calls man to holiness, which is the real purity of heart: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathens who do not know God.”
  - b. He contrasts “holiness” to “uncleanness” (v. 7).
  - c. Purity is a virtue, or capacity, for self-control. It must be rooted in the will, or as St. Thomas Aquinas says, in the concupiscible appetite. Purity contains the impulse of sensitive desires and is a form of temperance.
  - d. But purity also allows for controlling the body in “holiness and honor.” This abstinence and control are mutually dependent; one is impossible without the other. It overcomes the flesh for the sake of the Spirit. The Pauline notion of purity is right, complete and adequate. It is not just a virtue, but a fruit and manifestation of life according to the Spirit.
  - e. To understand Paul better, we have to understand his use of “honor,” which is a key to “holiness.” It is a spiritual power that helps man act [doubtless connected with nuptial meaning of body and call to communion in love]. In 1 Cor 12:18-25, Paul says about the Mystical Body of Christ, “God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.” For Paul, the human body is worthy of honor, because man prescientifically “is” that body, [which is the sign or sacrament of the person]. The body deserves honor because of its holiness flowing from the mysteries of creation and redemption.
  - f. Paul’s mention of the “weaker” or “unpresentable parts” of the human body evokes the shame flowing from original sin in the historical man subjected to the three-fold lust. But in shame, too, there is an echo of man’s original innocence and hence shame fosters “respect” for the body in “holiness and honor.” Paul says “God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor, to the inferior parts, that there may be no discord in the body.” The original state of man had no such discord, which historical man knows. There was an original harmony (purity) of the “heart,” which enabled man and woman to experience happily and simply the uniting power of their bodies, which was the substratum of their *communio personarum*. Paul recommends greater “modesty” concerning what is “unpresentable” in man to overcome this “discord in the body.”
  - g. In these two letters, St. Paul reveals the Christian virtue of purity as an effective way to become detached from the fruit of lust of the flesh in the human heart. According to Paul, purity is a “capacity” centered on the dignity of the person in relation to the (femininity or masculinity which is manifested in his or her) body. It is a fruit of life according to the Spirit. The moral dimension (virtue) and the charismatic dimension (the gift of the HS) are closely connected.
10. Body is called to be the temple of the HS (1Cor6:19), and to “shun immorality.” Body is a temple.

- a. The body is called to be the “temple” of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). Right before this, he says, “Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body.” These sins are against the “holiness” and “honor” of the body. Such sins “profane” the body, and therefore the temple of the HS.
  - b. Because of the indwelling of God in the person, man’s body is not “his own.” The HS is another source of the dignity of the body and of the moral duty flowing from this dignity. In the redemption,
    - i. Christ has imprinted on the body a new dignity, since the body with the soul has been admitted to union with the Person of the Son through the redemption of the body. Man was bought “with a price” (6:20). This brings about the duty of controlling one’s body in holiness and honor.
    - ii. The fruit of redemption is the HS, who dwells in man and his body as in a temple. The body is therefore not meant for “immorality” but “for the Lord” and “the Lord for the body” (6:13).
11. In the incarnation, human body enters into the Trinity. We become members of his body. We can’t join these members to a prostitute (1Cor 6:15). We’re called to unity of spirit with Christ in body.
- a. In the Incarnation, the human body becomes the body of the God-man. In Christ, the human body receives a new supernatural elevation, which must impact human behavior with regard to his and others’ bodies. The redemption of the body involves a new measure of the holiness of the body, to which St. Paul refers in drastic terms: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two shall become one flesh' But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1Cor 6:15-17). We are called to this unity of spirit with Christ in the body.
  - b. V. 20. “Glorify God in your body.” Purity is this glory. Life according to the Spirit is the means.
    - i. The indwelling of the HS in the temple of the human body bears fruit in the man who lives according to the Spirit. The gift of piety serves purity, making the human subject sensitive to that dignity of the human body by virtue of creation and redemption. This helps us to reverence God in the body and realize we are not our own. This involves abstention from “immorality,” but also involves love, according to the image and likeness of God. Paul says, “So glorify God in your body” (v. 20). Purity is the glory of the human body before God. The dignity of love in interpersonal relations glorifies God. From purity flows beauty, which leads to simplicity, cordiality, and personal trust in love. The connection of purity with love and purity-in-love with piety is a little known part of the theology of the body we will take up later.
  - c. Man is not called here to original innocence, but to purity in historical state. This purity allows man to rediscover nuptial value of body, and hold it in holiness and honor.
  - d. The whole law is fulfilled in the Gospel commandment of charity. The new Gospel ethos appeals to man freely to choose this love. Paul, like Christ, stresses that freedom is for love. Christ set us free so that we might love freely. This is the vocation to freedom, in which life according to the Spirit is realized. But the choice is ours: “Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another (Gal 5:13). We can misuse freedom against the Spirit. Living according to the flesh negates this use of freedom for which Christ set us free. We return to the “yoke” of the three-fold lust. Man no longer is suited to the real gift of himself in freedom according to the nuptial meaning of his body.
    - i. In summary, this purity of heart is the positive good which is opened by the overcoming of desire (through the “negative” side of temperance).
    - ii. It is the true freedom from lust. St. Paul’s description of “life according to the Spirit” gives a complete image of Christ’s words on the purity of the heart. Christ’s words contain ethical and anthropological truth and hence are important for the theology of the body.

They are realistic; they do not call man to the state of original innocence, but indicate to him the path to purity in the state of hereditary sinfulness through life according to the Spirit and the redemption of the body carried out by Christ.

- iii. Purity of heart allows man to rediscover and realize the nuptial value of the body. The pure man enjoys the fruits of victory over lust through controlling the body in holiness and honor. The gift of piety allows man to treat his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit and experience the joy of mastering himself and giving himself to others.

### **Living a Trinitarian Life**

1. Each of the persons of the Blessed Trinity points to the other, and each wishes to bring us into the communion of persons in love.
2. If we really enter into a Trinitarian life, to grow into the image and likeness in which we have been made, then it will show by our being people of communion, communion with God and with others.
3. Sometimes people live their faith as if it's just about "God and me." It's not.
  - a. We're called to be formed by the grace of the Blessed Trinity into a communion of persons, a real communion of saints.
  - b. That's why we need to leave our gift at the altar and go reconcile with our brothers.
  - c. That's why Jesus tells us, not "love me as I have loved you," but "love one another as I have loved you."
  - d. That's why after he asked Simon son of Jonah three times at the end of St. John's Gospel whether he loved him, he didn't say, "good," but "feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep." "Follow me."
4. Our deeper entrance into the persons of the Blessed Trinity is a call for us to enter into communion with others, so that one day we can enter fully into the communion of saints within the eternal communion of persons in love who is God in heaven.