

June 11, 2017 John 3:16-18 & Ex. 34: 4-9

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Stone, Naomi. [A Day of Freedom](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Richness of the Mystery of God Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)



### ENTERING THE SCENE:

The Trinity as a core truth of our belief is a reality that we sense but cannot adequately describe. We have experiences of it when we go to the Word, participate in worship, and reflect on our experiences with each other. We even somehow sense that all relationships have a Trinitarian aspect to them. When we keep in balance our relationship with God, self and others, we find wholeness and holiness. Jesus is the way we as Christians get a “hands on” experience of God-ness. Take some time this week to reflect on how you make real in your life the mystery of the Trinity.

### Jn. 3:16-18

16 For God so loved the **world** that he gave his **one and only Son**, that whoever **believes in him** shall not **perish** but have **eternal life**. 17 For God did not **send his Son** into the **world** to **condemn the world**, but to save the **world** through him. 18 Whoever **believes in him** is not **condemned**, but whoever

does not **believe** stands **condemned** already because he has not **believed** in the **name of God's one and only Son**.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Trinity: God’s way of expressing unconditional love. How has loving and being loved helped you to understand the reality that we call the Trinity?

**PRAYER:** Lord, you knew that we could only begin to get a grasp on what loving means by first being loved. So You came to us within our boundaries of space and time in Jesus. Then you knew that we would be forever trapped by thinking that this was all there is for us. Help me as I reflect on my experience of loving and being loved. Then help me stand under what You want for me, and to shine with joy at this realization. Amen.

### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**ONE AND ONLY SON:** By the time of John’s gospel some two to three generations from the Resurrection, people had come to see that Jesus’ way to God is a way so unique that they began to speak of him as the one and only truly begotten son of God. All the others that called themselves sons of God were of a different nature than Jesus.

*How does this development lend itself to the beginning awareness that will come to be known as the Trinity? If you were to explain the concept of the Trinity to someone, how would you do it?*

**BELIEVES IN HIM:** To believe in Jesus is to believe what he taught about God, and to be in the same kind of relationship with God as he did and does.

*What have you done today that could demonstrate that you “believe in him”?*

**SEND HIS SON:** The people experienced God in a new and more powerful way once they had the experience of Jesus. Then they saw more clearly who Jesus truly was with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Their experience of God as three-ness now challenges them to find a way to express what they experienced.

*How does studying the gospels help you to enter into this same kind of experience?*

**ETERNAL LIFE:** From earliest days, humanity has always felt that death was not the end of personal existence. Why else do we bury people with possessions and provisions? The two ideas joined into the one called eternal life. Often we hear people in the gospels asking Jesus “what must we do to obtain eternal life”.

*What does the concept of eternal life mean to you? If you lived in the “21<sup>st</sup> century described below, would you have your brain mapped so that you could download it to another form of body that would not die?*

**PERISH:** The Sadducees did not believe in eternal life, but the Pharisees did. If this earthly life is really all there is, perishing takes on a finality that is awesome. If, however, there is such a thing as eternal life, the word perish changes considerably.

*When you make decisions, do you make them as a “Pharisee” or a “Sadducee”? What feelings do you associate with the word perish?*



**WORLD:** In John's gospel the world is anything that existed in space/time. It can and will perish. In the time of this gospel, people were perishing because they professed belief in Jesus as the Christ. Many were choosing to opt out of the faith community, and this caused pain and confusion within the community.

*What do you think when you hear about people being killed for their faith in other parts of the world?*

**CONDEMN/CONDEMNED:** Sometimes when we are getting accurate feedback from our choices, we experience it as condemnation, when indeed; we are simply seeing the consequences of our choices. The wisdom inherent in the experience is brought by hindsight, and thus eludes us at the moment of the experience. God's people, when experiencing pain or frustration, many times interpreted this as God's displeasure, rather than God's faithfulness to truth. If we persist in refusing truth, we 'condemn' ourselves to failure.

*Has hindsight ever shown you that a painful or frustrating experience was accurate feedback, not punishment? How long did it take you to move from the one feeling to the other?*

**NAME:** People believed in Jesus' name. They were baptized in Jesus' name (e.g. 1Pt. 1: 2). Being identified with Jesus' name meant that you accepted his understanding of God. In John, it means that they had accepted Jesus over John the Baptist.

*How do you understand believing in Jesus' name? How do you sort out from the many understandings of this phrase, the one that matches the gospel's understanding of that concept? What understanding would be powerful enough for you to die over?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Jn 3:16 // 1 Jn. 4:9; Jn. 3:17 // Jn. 12:47;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Ex. 34: 4-6, 8-9; Dan. 3: 52-56; 2 Cor. 13:11-13; Jn. 3:16-18; Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 1:1-2:4; [Ps. 8](#); 2 Cor. 13:11-13; Matthew 28: 16-20;

#### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The Trinity is the life that the Spirit lives and brings. Pg. 214.

Goergen, Donald. *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit*. NY: Paulist Press. 2006.

God is constantly outpouring. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit can trust that self-emptying, knowing that the space created will be filled. Like a waterwheel of divine love, the Father empties all of himself into the Son. The Son receives and empties all of himself into the Spirit. The Spirit receives and empties all of himself/herself into the Father. The Father receives and the cycle continues. It's no good telling people to let go if they can't be assured they will be refilled, but the Trinity gives us a model for how that can happen. I can let go, because I trust I will always be filled up again. That is the pattern of reality. Richard Rohr

The nature of the church should manifest the nature of God. The doctrine of the Trinity reminds us that in God there is neither hierarchy nor inequality, neither division nor competition, but only unity in love amid diversity. The Christian community is the image or icon of the invisible God when its communitarian life mirrors the inclusivity of divine love. Catherine LaCugna

Eternal Trinity, Godhead, mystery deep as the sea, / you could give me no greater gift than the gift of yourself.

Yes, you are a fire that takes away the coldness, / illuminates the mind with its light, / and causes me to know your truth. / And I know that you are beauty and wisdom itself. - St. Catherine of Siena

Trinity does not merely mean that the three persons enter into relationships with one another, but rather that the persons mutually constitute one another with the relationships. Jackelen, Antje. *Time and Eternity*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press. 2005. Pg 192.

God ever works with his two hands, the Son and the Spirit-St. Irenaeus (2<sup>nd</sup> C. bishop)

Christian prayer rests upon the irreversible fact of the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ and its confirmation in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is the basis of true prayer as well as its goal. Prayer, as biblical faith understands it, is made possible by the triune God and is directed to this God. - Donald G. Bloesch, "The Struggle of Prayer"

The Trinity is like a string trio, each playing a different instrument and making a different contribution, but so attuned to each other that they produce a common sound, each line of which needs the other two to be intelligible. St. Augustine

#### *Finding God in Community*

God is a trinity, a flow of relationships among persons. If this is true, and scripture assures us that it is, then the realities of dealing with each other in community, at the dinner-table, over a bottle of wine or an argument, not to mention the simple giving and receiving of hospitality are not a pure, secular experiences but the stuff of church, the place where the life of God flows through us.

By definition, God is ineffable, beyond imagination and beyond language, even the best language of theology and church

dogma. God can never be understood or captured adequately in any formula. But God can be known, experienced, tasted, related to in love and friendship. God is Someone and Something that we live within and which can flow through our veins. To make God real in our lives, therefore, we needn't sneak off, shamrocks and triangles in hand, to try to somehow picture how three-can-be-one and one-can-be-three. Nor indeed need we read academic books on theology, valuable though these may be. No. God is a flow of relationships to be experienced in community, family, parish, friendship, and hospitality. When we live inside of these relationships, God lives inside of us and we live inside of God. Scripture assures us that we abide in God whenever we stay inside of family, community, parish, friendship, hospitality - and, yes, even when we fall in love.

The most pernicious heresies that block us from properly knowing God are not those of formal dogma, but those of a culture of individualism that invite us to believe that we are self-sufficient, that we can have community and family on our own terms, and that we can have God without dealing with each other. But God is community - and only in opening our lives in gracious hospitality will we ever understand that. Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Jesus awoke at the hands of John the Baptist to the truth that he was one with God. He then returned to the world of his fellow Jews and tried to teach them that they too contain the kingdom of heaven, that they too are both human and divine. John 3: 16. God's love is what makes God-realization possible. God's love speaks to the intimacy of matter and spirit. They are not opposites, but twin sides of a God who cannot be restricted by or reduced to one or the other. God is bigger than our dualities. If we would but trust in God's love, we could look beyond the self and discover the Self; we could look beyond the lone and lonely ego and discover the original face of the Son, the child of God that is our truest self. It is not that we are to believe in Jesus, but to believe in and surrender to that which Jesus revealed: the fact that I and the Father are one; that every I is also the I AM that is God.

The instance on Jesus' uniqueness renders this passage a condemnation of all those who are not Christians. But look at it again. Condemnation is continued dwelling in the darkness of ignorance. Ignorant of our original self; we dwell in the dark loneliness of the separate self. The darkness is our sense of alienation and existential loneliness, which haunts all who insist they are apart from rather than a part of God. The light of truth is revealed only when we abandon our self-centered point of view, and realize the truth that we are all the light, and all our deeds done with the Whole in mind are done IN GOD; that is, they reveal the profound and simple fact that we are always in *God*. Shapiro, Rami M. *Listening to Jesus with an Ear for God. Pages 172-3.*

Bruteau, Beatrice. *Jesus Through Jewish Eyes*. Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2001.

**Doctrine of the Trinity:** This doctrine developed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in response to challenges by some that the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were co-equal, co-eternal, or of one essence. The Council of Constantinople in 381 declared it as a definitive belief of the Christian Church.

**Feast of the Holy Trinity:** A votive Mass of the Most Holy Trinity dates from the 7<sup>th</sup> century; an Office was composed in the 10<sup>th</sup> century; in 1334, John XXII extended the feast to the universal church.

In the New Testament the principal term for eternity is *aion*, which comes into English also as aeon, meaning literally an age that lasts for a long time. This is the term used in John 3: 16: "For God so love the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life (*aoen aionion*)." Eastern Orthodox liturgies preserve the New Testament sense of the world when repeating that salvation lasts "unto ages of ages."

Peters, Ted. *Eschatology: Eternal Now or Cosmic Future?*. Zygon. 6/01. Page 352

This gift of existence to creation is a gift truly given. The Word of God, God the Son, the otherness of the Father within God, leaves God, empties itself into nothingness so that creation may be. The gift is the Word of God truly given to the otherness of creation. The Word of God spoken into creation creates the space for creation to become itself, no strings attached. This gift is given to creation so that it can become itself, not God. It is the gift of God's grace, given to creation through his Word, Jesus Christ, that creates creation: "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son (Jn. 3:16). God gave his Son to creation so that creation could become through the Word and for the Word. Brun, Rudolf B. *Cosmology, Cosmic Evolution, and Sacramental Reality: A Christian Contribution*. Zygon. 3/02 Page 178

The goal of mission and of service is not to improve the world and create utopia on earth; it is that the world may believe and know, know that God loves the world and has sent the Son to deliver it from perishing to everlasting and *abundant life*. Pg. 457.

Lewis, Alan E. *Between Cross and Resurrection*. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001.

God is the self-related community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the community of divine love, the principle of creativity is always there, in the form of the Father; the principle of otherness is always there, in the form of the Son; and the principle of ecstasy is always there, in the form of the Spirit. Thus the inner divine life is characterized by a self-relatedness that provides the common matrix for God's outward relationality. The world is created out of God's will, a divine will that stimulates and enjoys otherness.

Gregersen, Niels Henrik. *Risk and Religion: Toward a Theology of Risk Taking*. Zygon. 6/03 P. 371

**DEAD SEA SCROLLS: MANUAL OF DISCIPLINE** "He [God] has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and falsehood. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of falsehood spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness". 3:18-21

The True Self in the World: The world is the place where we meet God because it is the place where God meets us in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ did not merely inhabit human flesh; he became flesh. He made himself, as God, to be one with humanity in the concrete, historical realities of human life. Truly, God has entered into the world and it is in the world that Christians must turn to find God. Finley, James. Merton's Palace of Nowhere. Notre Dame, IN. Ave Maria Press.1978.

In the magazine **FORBES ASAP** Feb. 22, 1999, an article taken from the book The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence by Raymond Kurzweil titled; Piece of Mind: Downloading Brains in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, pages 71f, he states that: "we will, by the next century, reverse engineer the human brain". By mapping the brain, synapse by synapse, with the use of supercomputing technology, he foresees us being able to download our brains and then uploading them into new "hardware" or bodies. "In this way, death will disappear by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Until now, our mortality was tied to the longevity of our *hardware*. ...But in 100 years, our identity will be based on our evolving mind file. We will be software, not hardware. Just as we don't throw our files away when we change personal computers, we won't throw our mind file away. We will merely port ourselves to the latest, every more capable "personal" computer. Our immortality will be a matter of making frequent backups. If we're careless about this, we'll have to load a backup copy and be doomed to repeat the recent past."

"Why does being capable of love depend, therefore, on being willing to go through suffering? It is because loving means going out to the things of life just as knowing means taking them into oneself. When I make the lover's choice, when I give my heart to my life rather than withhold my heart, I enter into a relationship with the things of my life that makes me vulnerable to loss and deprivation. God becomes vulnerable in loving the world, "for God so loved the world..." So if I am unwilling to go through suffering, I become unable to make the lover's choice. If I enter into God's relationship with the world, on the other hand, if I embrace suffering, that of my own life and that of others in its connection with me, I become able to give my heart. I become capable of love and of the knowledge that comes of love. I become capable of God." Dunne, John S. The Church of the Poor Devil. NY. Macmillan Pub. Inc.1982. Page 121.

"O consuming fire, Spirit of love, overshadow me that the Word may become, as it were, incarnate within my soul; may I be to him an extension of his humanity so that in me he may work all his mystery anew." - Elizabeth of the Trinity –

God loved us into being because God thirsts for that relationship with each one of us. God maintains us in being every moment of every day because God thirsts for us. Bp. Gumbleton

For it is surely in the Trinity of Persons that God appears to us most clearly as the 'wholly other', and, at the same time, as closer to us than any being. (177) Merton, Thomas. The Monastic Journey. Kansas City, KS. Sheed Andres & McMeel, Inc. 1977

“YES, GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON,  
What am I given to give? / Easy answers don't do. / Extra things don't much count.  
What – in my life – is “my only son”?  
How much do I believe?

THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM...MAY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”  
Halpin, Marlene, Dominican. Leading Prayer: Plain and Simple. Dubuque, IA. Brown Pub. 1990.

Contemplation's object is God, and God is triune life. But as far as we are concerned, we only know of this triune life from the son's incarnation. Consequently we must not abstract from the incarnation in our contemplation.

Hans Urs von Balthasar- Prayer



The Eucharistic prayer is the great prayer of thanksgiving, around which lies the entire mystery of our salvation. It is much more than a tool to “bring God down onto the altar.” Rather, it is more sublime, something akin to Mary's understanding of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, but here coming on us all, bringing forth the mystery we call God: the sacred slipping into the profane and bearing God to humans. Plaiss, Mark. This, Too Is My Body. Commonweal. 5/19/06. Pg. 10.

Meister Eckhart, defined the Trinity this way: “When the Father laughs at the Son and the Son laughs back at the Father, that laughter gives pleasure, that pleasure gives joy, that joy gives love, and that love is the Holy Spirit.”

#### SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 87-90.To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 130-133.To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)