

Holy Trinity Sunday Yr C: Fatherhood of God & Human Fatherhood

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Today, one week after the great feast of Pentecost, we celebrate holy Trinity Sunday.

It is very fitting that the feast of Holy Trinity follows the feast of Pentecost.

The Holy Trinity is the central mystery of our Catholic Faith: there is one God, but three Divine Persons in the one God.

The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God - which means that all three Divine Persons are coequal – one is not greater than the other;

coeternal – all three Persons had no beginning and will have no end: which means God the Father did not come before God the Son.

All three Divine Persons are all-powerful, all-knowing, and all loving.

That the three Divine Persons are coequal and coeternal sounds like a contradiction.

In fact, the Muslims accuse us of being polytheists - that is, a professing belief in three different gods.

But no, we do not believe in three gods, but three Divine Persons in the one God.

So, how do we respond to this accusation from the Muslims, those who practice Islam. They believe in one God – Allah – which in Arabic means “God”?

What is it that makes the three divine persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – distinct, individual persons, and not just three different names for God – which is an ancient heresy?

It is their *relations* to one another: from all eternity God the Father eternally begets or generates the Son – who is called the Word (cf. the beginning of

John's Gospel: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word **was** God."*

We know ourselves by reflecting on who we are. With words and concepts in our minds, we know ourselves – but not perfectly.

God the Father, however, knows Himself perfectly. From all eternity God the Father has known Himself in an infinitely perfect manner; and the very act of knowing Himself perfectly generates another Person – the Word.

The Son, the Eternal Word, is the living expression of God the Father's eternal act of knowing Himself in an infinitely perfect way. Our first reading (Proverbs) really says that same thing, in different terms: *"Before the earth was formed, I was brought forth."*

So, God the Father and God the Son are distinct Persons because the Father eternally generates or begets the Son, and the Son is eternally begotten.

This is what we mean when, in the Nicene Creed every Sunday, we profess our belief that Jesus, the Son, is *"God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father"* – which means that God the Son/the eternal Word is of the same substance or nature as God the Father.

But we're not finished yet.

From all eternity there has been a love that has flowed between God the Father and God the Son - a love so perfect that it too is another Divine Person: the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Fruit of the love that has been eternally breathed forth between God the Father and God the Son.

In fact, it is for this reason that the *Catechism* teaches that one of the names of the Holy Spirit is "Fruit."

Also, this is why we call the Third Person of the Trinity the Holy **Spirit** – from the Hebrew word “**ruah**” which means “spirit” or “breath.”

And here we turn again to the Nicene Creed: We profess every Sunday that we believe the Holy Spirit “*proceeds from the Father and the Son*” – that is, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the mutual love breathed forth from all eternity between the Father and the Son.

So, how are the three Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity distinct from one another? God the Father eternally begets God the Son, the Word; and the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the mutual love breathed forth between the Father and the Son.

If you don't fully understand this, don't worry. We can never fully grasp this greatest of mysteries; we never will, even in Heaven, because our finite minds will never fully comprehend the mystery of the Trinity, the infinite Godhead.

Here's another aspect of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, three Divine Persons in the One God: in the Gospels Jesus says, “*the Father is greater than I.*” Greater in what sense? Not that God the Father came before God the Son, or that the Son is not equal to God the Father.

Rather, Jesus's words mean, first, that He is the Word who became flesh; Jesus is both God and man in one divine person. But Christ's human nature is created, and therefore inferior to the God the Father's divine nature.

Also, Jesus' words that “*the Father is greater than I,*” mean that God the Father is the **Source** of the Divine Persons in the Trinity - precisely because God the Father is Unbegotten; God the Father eternally begets the Son, and the Son is eternally begotten.

God the Father is the Source not in a succession time (because God is eternal, outside of time); but in the order of logic/reason.

And, while there is a perfect equality between the three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, because all three Persons have the same divine nature – nonetheless there is an order that exists in the Trinity, among the

three Divine Persons, precisely because God the Father is the Unbegotten One, the Source of the Trinity.

Therefore, God the Son obeys God the Father: Jesus says: “I came to do not my own will, but the will of the one who sent me” (cf. *Jn* 6:38), i.e., the Father

It is good to reflect on this theme on this Sunday, which is Father’s Day.

We know that God brought the human race into existence when He created Adam and Eve.

The second chapter of Genesis reveals to us that Adam was created first, and then Eve was brought forth from Adam’s side.

Now, there is a fundamental equality between human persons, including male and female, because we are all created in God’s image and likeness; as rational beings with an immortal soul we all have a supreme dignity and value in God’s eyes.

But as in God Himself, three Divine Persons, there exists an order; so also in the home and family.

St. Paul tells us that all human fatherhood has its source in God the Father (cf. *Eph.* 3:14-15); and this is the basis for the divinely-willed order in the family established by God.

In the human family, the father is head, the mother is heart; they complement one another.

Pope Pius XI, in his great encyclical on Christian Marriage, *Casti Canubii*, explains this beautifully when he teaches:

Domestic society being confirmed, therefore, by this bond of love, there should flourish in it that “order of love,” as St. Augustine calls it. This order includes both the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children (no. 26)

The Pope then quotes St. Paul, who says: “*Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church, [His Bride]*” (*Eph.* 5:22-23).

St. Paul goes on to say that as Jesus, the Bridegroom, laid down His life for His Bride, the Church, so must husbands lay down their lives for their wives.

Why, according to God's order for the family, must wives submit to their husbands? Because in the home and family, there can't be two heads – for then you have a monster that will tear at, and destroy itself.

True, submitting one's will to another is never easy; it requires humility, and above all, the help of God's grace. But this is a key to peace and harmony in the home and family. (Children must submit their wills to their parents.)

Continuing, Pope Pius XI teaches: *“For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling [authority], so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love”* (no. 27).

The Pope goes on to explain that this is not to say the wife has no role in ruling/governance in the home, and that the husband has no place in the order of love.

Rather, husbands and wives must acknowledge their respective roles according to God's divinely-planned order in the family: husband and wife, head and heart, which are to work together in harmony, in complementary fashion.

Radical feminism has brutally attacked the notion of the headship of the husband in the family; in fact it has attacked the whole idea of manhood, promoting the notion of “toxic masculinity” - as if men should apologize for being men.

Let us pray on this Father's Day that all fathers will look to the greatest of all earthly fathers, St. Joseph, as a source of strength and inspiration for what true, authentic manhood and fatherhood should be: strong but gentle; firm but kind, compassionate, and loving – in an authentic, manly way.