

## Grace Notes in Miniature,

Friday June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear friends:

Last week we celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit and so it follows quite naturally that this week we have the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. This allows for a more

gentle transition from the “big” celebrations of Easter and Pentecost back to Ordinary Time – which still is not “ordinary” in our usual use of the word, but means “counted” – like an ordinal number.

We begin our Church Year with God sending the Son and then they together (see a previous edition discussion on the “Filioque Clause”)



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filioque#:~:text=Controversy,to%20which%20the%20term%20refers>

send the Holy Spirit to be with us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5MEoJZo38M>

Most Catholics can tell you what the Holy Trinity is: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit whom we recognise every time we “make the sign of our faith”; however, it is still a concept which is hard to explain, especially to non-Christians. Irish lore tells us that St Patrick used the shamrock, with its three-fold leaf, to teach the doctrine in the early fifth century. This feast day was celebrated locally as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century but in 1334 Pope John XXII approved it for the entire church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the “hierarchy of the truths of faith”. The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men “and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin” (CCC, 234).

We proclaim from Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One” and recognise God as the Creator of heaven and earth in Genesis 1:1. The image of God as Father and sovereign Lord of the universe is woven throughout the scriptures. John 1:1–4 presents us with Jesus (the Word) as having been present from the very beginning of existence as God:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life,<sup>[a]</sup> and the life was the light of all people.(NRSV)

And John 14:16 is Jesus’ promise that the Holy Spirit will come to us and for all time.

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.”

So, we believe in One God and One Only who exists in three Persons, equal and eternal, who are all worthy of equal praise and worship, distinct yet acting in unity, and who constitute the one true God of the Bible. Whew! Theologians throughout history have struggled – and continue to struggle – with this doctrine and it has challenged the faith of many. St Augustine, in *De Trinitate*, remarked that “in no other subject is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more rewarding.” Ultimately, we allocate it to the realm of “mystery” and recognise that we may never fully understand it in this life.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoChsmDal3M>

With every blessing of the Trinity

Gillian

*The Trinity*, tempera and gold on parchment by Taddeo Crivelli, from a manuscript from 1460–70; in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. God the Father holds the crucified Christ, with the dove—as the Holy Spirit—between the two.

