

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

When confronted by a baffling situation or a contentious person he didn't understand, my beloved predecessor, Fr. George Schneider, would simply say, "Ah, there are more mysteries than the Trinity."

That is what we are called to ponder today—the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God revealed Himself to us as a Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three persons in one God. Christians have been trying to wrap their minds around this revealed truth of God since the third century.

After years of pondering the Holy Trinity, one of the greatest theologians of all time, St. Augustine, was walking on a beach one day when he encountered a young boy digging a hole in the sand and then running to the surf with a bucket and running back to fill the hole with water. He asked the boy what he was doing. The youngster said, "I am going to pour the whole ocean into the hole I dug." All of a sudden the brilliant Augustine reportedly realized, "That's what I'm trying to do—comprehend infinity with my finite understanding."

It's impossible, of course, but we keep on trying to comprehend, and it's important that we do. Why? Since this is how God has revealed Himself to us because He wants us to know who He is so that we can enter into a deeper relationship with Him.

God knows, I am no theologian or great scholar. I'm simply a believer who has spent his life trying to grow in a relationship with God as long as I've lived. So, I'll take a shot at it—not explaining the incomprehensible—but sharing, at least, my understanding of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Like most I've questioned the very existence of God. Eventually I came to believe in Him as the Creator of the universe, because Big Bang or evolution or however all that is that came into being had to have had a primal cause.

In reading the Scriptures I came to see the testimony of many suggested that there were times in human history when God intervened in the lives of real people. This led me to question my own personal relationship with God. Was God really interested in me and those in my world? Where was there evidence of such interest? Was my being born into this world at this time, in this place, within my family a fluke—a mere meeting of genes and chromosomes and DNA—or was it intended? Perhaps it's merely my ego, but I could not accept the idea that I am just the result of thrashing matter bouncing about and coalescing into the person I've become. I came to believe my being was intended for a purpose? It's true, I realize, not all believe that, but, for me, Someone had a purpose in creating me, and, that, of course, suggests to me that there is meant to be a relationship between me and my Creator. Just as Michelangelo's "Pieta" will forever be bound to Michelangelo as its creator, so will I forever be bound to the One who created me.

So, who is this Creator, this God, to me and who am I to be to Him? This is where Jesus entered into my notion of God. It is He who revealed God to me and to us as our loving Father. First He reveals who God is to Him. God to Jesus is “Abba”, not just generic Father, but in speaking of Him, Jesus uses the endearing, child-like term, “Daddy”.

In allowing myself to view God as Daddy, I, of course, thought back to my own childhood relationship to my Father when he was Daddy to me. I realize I was blessed, where many were not, to have a Daddy who loved me. I remember waiting for him to come home from work, and me, and my sisters, would line up at the door, waiting for him to pick each of us up in his arms, hug us, throw us up in the air, and catch each of us and kiss us before he set us down. I have so many fond memories of a Daddy who loved me that it was easy for me to find in God a loving Father, as Jesus revealed Him. Others, perhaps, have to think of God as Mommy or Grandma, or Aunt Jean.

Fathers, please hear me. I cannot say this enough. The image your children have of God is YOU. To them God looks and acts just like Daddy.

But Jesus also told us that He and the Father are one. This one was a little trickier for me. In saying this Jesus got Himself in trouble with his contemporaries, so much so that they crucified Him for it. However, through prayerful reflection I think I know what he meant. In saying that He and the Father are One, He was telling us that He was not God as the Father is God, but rather He is God, who in His great love for us became God Incarnate, that is, God enfleshed in our humanity. While fully divine, Jesus is the human manifestation of God. Why, we may question, would God want to assume the limitations of our humanity?

Soren Kierkegard, the great Danish theologian/philosopher, explains it by telling the story of a prince who wanted to find a maiden suitable to be his queen. One day while running an errand in the local village for his father he passed through a poor section. As he glanced out the window of the carriage his eyes fell upon a beautiful peasant girl. During the ensuing days he made a point of passing by the young lady and soon fell in love. But he had a problem. How would he seek her hand?

He could order her to marry him. But even a prince wants his bride to marry him freely and voluntarily and not through coercion. He could put on his most splendid uniform and be driven in his princely carriage drawn by six great horses. But if he did this he would never be certain that the young woman loved him or was simply smitten with all the royal splendor. He resolved the problem by removing his princely robes and dressing in the garb of a peasant and moving into the village. He lived and worked among the people, shared their interests and concerns, and spoke their language. In time the young maiden grew to love him for who he was and loved him because he had first loved her.

This very simple, almost child-like story, written by one of the most brilliant Christian minds helps us to understand this Incarnate God who is Jesus Christ. In Him, God came and lived

among us. He became the God who wants to be with us and to show us how much He loves us. In Jesus Christ the incomprehensible God makes Himself knowable. We get a glimpse of His glory. In the person of Jesus, the mysterious Other who created the stars and the universe goes all the way, even to a cross on Calvary, so that He might claim us as His own.

I have come to understand that the God whom we've come to know as God the Holy Spirit is the intimate love which binds the Father and Son so tightly together that they share a unity of being.

I understand this unity when I contemplate the breath that comes forth from God the Father is the Holy Spirit that forms the Word of God who is Jesus Christ, as explained by St. John in the prologue to his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be."

It is that same breath of God, the Holy Spirit, who is breathed into us when we were baptized into Christ Jesus. God the Holy Spirit, then, is God intimately poured into our very being drawing us into the bond of love between the infinite God whom we call Father, better "Abba", that is Daddy, and the incarnate God, whom we know as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God.

It is with this understanding of the Trinity that these most popular verses in all the Bible, John 3: 16-17, which is our Gospel text today makes sense to me: "God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him, might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

In another place this same evangelist John tells us, "God is Love". In the person of Jesus he shows us what that love for us consists in. He loves us so much that He willingly died for us. And He loves us so much that in the Risen Christ he came back again to assure us that where He is, we also may be. But John also tells us in the same place: "He who abides in love, abides in God and God in him."

This takes me back to one of the first questions that I pondered in this exercise, "What was God's purpose in creating me?" Isn't the answer now apparent? God created me, and you, and all of us, to learn to love as He loves, sacrificially as Jesus showed us how God loves.

Many years ago I was afforded one of the most beautiful compliments I have ever been given. I share it with you in the deepest humility because if it is true it is imperfectly so. Mother Anna Brown, who was our choir director at Most Precious Blood and continues to be a dear friend told the Church, "When you color Vic, don't color him white and you sure can't color him black. Just color him love."

When she said that I realized that is my calling, that is my vocation, that is my reason for being—to love—to love as God loves—to be drawn by God the Holy Spirit who lives within me into the intimacy of the infinite God the Father and the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, together with all whom the Triune God loves in the whole world. And though I have fallen short so many times in loving as I am called to love, I know that I have an Advocate, the living presence of God the Holy Spirit in me calling me back to my true purpose.

May I suggest that is your calling, your vocation, your reason for being as well—to love—to love as God loves—to love in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.