

## Chaplain's Bulletin June 4, 2023



Dear Folks,

Today is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, three divine persons, one God. Many people think that this is just a tidbit of doctrine to learn in religion class and that is it. But it is the key to everything.

There are some who claim that the only reality is material. If the materialists are right, personhood is just a blip in the unfolding of the universe, and when it has run its course, it will vanish without a trace. In this model, as I understand it, love is just a byproduct of the mating and tribal instincts, and, once again, is just a blip in the universe. I don't find that terribly inspiring.

Our Hindu friends believe in an ultimate reality called the Absolute, which is everything put together. Explaining as best as I can, particular things are a lapse from the Absolute, and the goal is to lose individuality and be reabsorbed into the Absolute. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a Hindu scholar rejected the notion of a personal God, calling the idea "anthropomorphizing the Absolute." They seek to lose individuality and be gathered into the Absolute, and then personhood will cease to exist. I don't find that terribly inspiring either.

However, we Christians say that personhood and love are the foundation of all reality. The Father is eternally begetting and giving Himself in love to the Son, and the Son is eternally receiving and returning that love to the Father. The love that passes between them is the Holy Spirit. The three persons who are one God is already the perfect community of love, but love by nature is fruitful, and so God created, and we were made in His image and likeness. This image and likeness is not about physical appearances, but the nature to receive and return ourselves in love.

An encounter with another person is different from anything else in reality. When I sit down with my laptop, I'm not thinking how it feels about me, what it's hopes and dreams are, or whether I'm making it happy (I don't even feel bad about typing that into the laptop). I'm just thinking about getting it to do what I want. It's an object. When I deal with another person that is an entirely different thing. This is someone with consciousness, with hopes, dreams, joys, and sorrows. This being is of infinite value apart from doing anything for me. I engage on a completely different level, and I recognize there is profound responsibility here.

Religion is not just a vague notion of "spiritual realities" or developing a "spiritual side" of ourselves, but encountering Someone who not only loves us, but is love Himself, who cherishes us, each of us tenderly, deeply, and constantly, who rejoices when we turn to Him, and who loves each and every human being uniquely. For Christians, there is no separation between loving God and loving neighbor (1 John 4:20).

If we can, as individuals and as a society, emphasize the most awesome mystery of the human person, the mysterious reality of being conscious in the first place, and the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, perhaps that would inspire a more peaceful, more charitable world.

Blessings,  
Fr. Jim

SOLEMNITY OF THE  
*Most Holy Trinity*