

A mystery to believe in: The Holy Trinity

A few weeks ago, I had the honour of being the sponsor for my nephew's confirmation.

The celebrant was Fr. Liborio Amaral. Fr. Liborio is a wonderfully enthusiastic priest and you could tell he was deeply committed to seeing that these young folks had an understanding of what the sacrament of confirmation was all about.

Fr. Liborio had an obvious impression on my nephew, especially in one area. It seems that Father had made it clear to them that he was going to be asking them questions as part of the Confirmation. The confirmandi were all talking about this terrifying possibility as they gathered in front of the church.

Just before we began, Fr. Liborio appeared in his red chasuble, and he called all of the sponsors over for some instruction about the celebration and a prayer. He ended by telling us that he had decided not to ask the kids any questions after-all. Instead, he would be asking the sponsors.

As we returned to our places, you could hear the soft rumbles from the gathered Catholic sponsors. The woman behind me pleaded that she was just the grandmother, while the man in front stated that he was a truck driver not a theologian.

It was an opportunity for me, as a highly trained deacon specialist, to offer them some advice on how to answer questions about the Holy Spirit.

I told them, "If Father calls upon you listen very intently to what he is saying. Perhaps rub your chin as he talks, and after he asks you the question, ponder it for a few seconds and then look at him and say; "Father, it is a mystery!"

This works with all most any question concerning not just the Holy Spirit but with the teachings about the Holy Trinity.

What is a mystery of the faith?

The Vatican Council has explained... that a mystery is a truth which we are not merely incapable of discovering apart from Divine Revelation, but which, even when revealed, remains "hidden by the veil of faith and enveloped, so to speak, by a kind of darkness". In other words, our understanding of it remains only partial, even after we have accepted it as part of the Divine message.

One such mystery of faith is summed up as follows:

+ In the Name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

This of course is the Sign of the Cross. Perhaps the first thing we are taught as Catholics. In this one simple gesture, we symbolize the great mystery of the Holy Trinity.

At one point in the confirmation, I was talking about earlier, Fr. Liborio asked the young people to stand if they had the courage to answer a question.

You can imagine the uneasiness. A few brave souls stood. Fr. Liborio encouraged them further with the words of the scripture- "Do Not be Afraid." Within a few minutes, the entire confirmation class was standing.

He then asked them all to answer three simple, yet mysterious questions. Each of the questions shared the same answer- I do.

I would like to ask each of you to answer these same questions. The answer is a loud "I do."

First question: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Response: I do.

Second Question: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Response: I do.

Final Question: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

Response: I do.

If we are honest with ourselves we will concede that in a large group like this it is easy to say I do in response to these questions.

It is more difficult to say what our agreement with these statements actually means in how we live our daily lives.

Most of you just agreed that you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

As followers of the way, as Christians, we believe that God, the Father is Love.

Fr. Robert Barron points out in a discussion on the Trinity that our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters believe in the same God- the God of Abraham. They believe that God loves his people.

We believe this as well but as Christians we go further. We profess that *God is Love*.

If you said I do in response to this first question then you believe in the mystery that:

- God is the creator of all that is seen and unseen;
- God created you in his own image;
- God loves you completely;
- And perhaps most importantly- *You are called to believe that you are worthy of this Love.*

Most of you have just confirmed that you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

We believe in the mystery that God is Love and Jesus is the Beloved. We believe Jesus is consubstantial with the Father. Christ is of the same substance as the Father.

A God who is Love, loved the world so much that he sent his only Son to be with us. He was born. He suffered. He died. We share these experiences with God in the person of Jesus.

Then He rose from the dead and He revealed to us the mystery of everlasting life.

Those of us who come to fully embrace the mystery of God made flesh in Jesus come to know that "All things are possible in Christ."

Life is still full of pain; suffering and we cannot escape the impact of death. As followers of Christ, however, we know we are the beloved of God and through Jesus we experience the Love that is God.

Most of you have just confirmed that you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

The Holy Spirit is the love that God the Father and the Son share for each other poured out on us.

If we believe this, if we have faith, we will know we are never alone. Jesus sent us an advocate to guide us home.

And most importantly we know- though we cannot prove it and we do not know how the mystery of the last day will work, we believe we will rise again and live in the everlasting love that is The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church.

If you are proud to profess it, in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord then let me here an enthusiastic AMEN!