

June 3, 2012

Feast of the Most Holy Trinity

Editorial Note: In France, the French celebrate a feast of St. Joan of Arc, a great patroness of the French nation. Sadly, she was burned at the stake by a group containing English bishops. It is a reminder from church history that sometimes women are looked down upon and seem a threat to some men.

The scripture yesterday was about two of the disciples begging Jesus to make them sit on thrones next to him when his kingdom would come. The other apostles were indignant!

Yes, Jesus does call knuckleheads into his service. I am one, as you probably already know. We recently celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, which assures us that the Holy Spirit will guide the church in the right direction—in the long run. In the short run, knuckleheads at every level, including the highest do messy things. Case in point: Now we have a Vatican bank scandal—a new one—there was another one some years ago. The Pope’s butler is accused of stealing some of the pope’s papers and leaking them to whom? Maybe to other cardinals who are upset with the perceived incompetence of the Cardinal who is the Vatican’s Secretary of State. Hmm! In the long span of church history there is nothing new under the sun. Whatever the other facts are, this is a fact: the Vatican has egg all over its face. Perhaps it should relent in disciplining the American nuns and take care of what is amiss in the papal household—and the Vatican itself—all run by, we had previously assumed, (perhaps mistakenly)—very wise men.

When Saint Patrick came to Ireland, he was met at a deep well by two young Celtic maidens. And he did not disdain their presence or ask to speak to their fathers. No, he respected them and he listened to their queries. These two wondered about the God St. Patrick was preaching, and so they asked him:

“Who is God,
And where is God,
Of whom is God,
and where is his dwelling?
Has he sons and daughters,
gold and silver,
this God of yours?
Is he ever living?
Is he beautiful?
Was his Son fostered by many?
Are his daughters dear and beautiful
to the men of the world?
Is he in heaven
Or on the earth?
In the sea,
In the rivers,
In the mountains,

In the valleys?
Speak to us
Tidings of him;
How will he be seen,
How is he loved,
How is he found?
Is It In youth
Or is it in old age
He is found?

Well, they had great questions did they not? And if we read the Breastplate prayer of Saint Patrick, he would have told them, "Yes! Our God IS in the rivers, and the mountains, and the valleys—and much more!"

And we know he used a shamrock, a green three leaved plant to explain that the Christian God is one God in three persons.

And he would have told them that God's Son is indeed beautiful. These pagan girls were very much attracted to the God Patrick described. And to his heroic Son, and his lovely Mother. They were converted, and not a drop of blood was shed in the conversion of the Irish from Druidry to Christianity.

And so today, we too ask: "And who is our God?" And we respond: "One God, three persons, the Holy Spirit the Love flowing between Father and Son. We are baptized in the Sign of the Trinity and confirmed in it, and anointed in it.

And our God is a community of love!

The Irish girls at the Well of Clibach would have rejoiced in this truth, because for them clan and community were paramount in their lives.

Community meant kinfolk; often children were "fostered" by aunts and cousins. Community meant dance and song around campfires. Community meant taking care of your kin, both the old, the sick, and the young. Community meant people working for the "common good."

Community meant living within a circle of love.

What the doctrine of the Trinity reveals to us today is that our God is a community of love!
Our God is not solitary like Zeus!
Our Trinity God is a community!

And to the degree that our lives are like a community, we are like God!

And so we pray:
"Glory be to the Father!
And to the Son!
And to the Holy Spirit!"
(The Holy Community)