

**SUNDAY GOSPEL***Our Triune God**John 3:16-18*

Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son. ■

GOSPEL REFLECTION*Fr Graham Schmitzer*

As you read the writings of St Therese, you will notice that she always speaks of God's merciful love. It is certainly reflected in today's Gospel as Jesus says to Nicodemus, "God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world but so that through him the world might be saved."

For fear of the Jews, Nicodemus came to see Jesus by night. Perhaps we have been "night visitors" to God, afraid to get too close. But God is a God of surprises. Once Nicodemus sensed the true mystery of Jesus, he had the courage to go openly to Pilate and ask for Jesus' body for burial. So many of us never get close to God because we have wrong perceptions of God. I remember a book my sister was once reading. It was written by a psychologist, and

one chapter was titled, "Who is the God you worship? The true God, or the God of your parents?" This psychologist had dealt with so many people living warped lives because of a warped idea of God.

Of all the apostles, St Peter is probably the most loveable – loveable because we know so many of his faults. He was willing to jump out of boats, walk on water, and declare his unending love for his Lord. But he also denied his Love three times, lost his confidence, and nearly drowned. It was because he was a sinner that he discovered the true nature of God's love – a merciful, forgiving love – and so he could write of God, "Cast all your cares on him since he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Perhaps the best way of understanding something of the mystery of God – who is Trinity – is to reflect on the love we show in our daily lives, especially the love within a family – the love of father and mother which becomes a third person in their child. This is but the faintest image of the love of Father, Son and Spirit – a love which makes them one – a love in which we have communion, thus making us responsible for each other and for the whole cosmos, God's footstool. This is why, at the end of every Mass, we are sent out on a mission of love in the name of the Trinity, for God's love is never static, never finished. So many leave Mass each Sunday thinking it is "finished"! It has only begun. ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, which leads us to contemplate and worship the divine life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: a life of communion and perfect love, origin and aim of the universe and of every creature: God. We also recognise in the Trinity the model for the Church, in which we are called to love each other as Jesus loved us. And love is the concrete sign that demonstrates faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And love is the badge of the Christian, as Jesus told us: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). It's a contradiction to think of Christians who hate. It's a contradiction. And the devil always seeks this: to make us hate, because he's always a troublemaker; he doesn't know love; God is love!

We are all called to witness and proclaim the message that "God is love", that God isn't far and insensitive to our human affairs.

He is close to us, always beside us, walking with us to share our joys and our sorrows, our hopes and our struggles. He loves us very much and for that reason he became man, he came into the world not to condemn it, but so the world would be saved through Jesus (cf. John 3:16-17). And this is the love of God in Jesus, this love that is so difficult to understand but that we feel when we draw close to Jesus. And he always forgives us, he always awaits us, he loves us so much. And we feel the love of Jesus and the love of God.

The Holy Spirit, gift of the Risen Jesus, conveys divine life to us and thus lets us enter into the dynamism of the Trinity, which is a dynamism of love, of communion, of mutual service, of sharing. A person who loves others for the very joy of love is a reflection of the Trinity. A family in which each person loves and helps one another is a reflection of the Trinity. A parish in which each person loves and shares

spiritual and material effects is a reflection of the Trinity.

True love is boundless, but it knows how to limit itself, to interact with others, to respect the freedom of others. Every Sunday we go to Mass, we celebrate the Eucharist together and the Eucharist is like the "burning bush" in which the Trinity humbly lives and communicates; for this reason the Church placed the feast of *Corpus Domini* after that of the Trinity. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. What is your image of God, how has it shaped your life?
2. How do you feel when you think of God as loving you so completely and wholeheartedly that he would die for you?
3. In what ways do you spread the joy of God's love for you with others?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for each other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

Reflect: Spend some time with Jesus asking him to reveal those areas where you might find a greater openness to his love and sharing that love with others.

Response: *Lord Jesus, let us know the depth of your love.*

Closing Prayer: Loving God, you invite us into relationship with you – a relationship of three persons, Father, Son & Spirit. Bind us closely to you, give us the joy of your love so that we may proclaim this love to all whom we meet.

