

GOSPEL*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.’

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS*24 May 2020*

Today, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, the Gospel is taken from Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus (cf. Jn 3:16-18). Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, passionate about the mystery of God: he recognizes in Jesus a divine master and goes to speak to him in secret, at night. Jesus listens to him, understands he is a man on a quest, and then first, he surprises him, answering that in order to enter the Kingdom of God, one must be reborn; then, he reveals the heart of the mystery to him, saying that God loved humanity so much that he sent his Son into the world. Jesus, therefore, the Son, speaks to us about his Father and his immense love.

Father and Son. It is a familiar image which, if we think about it, disrupts our images of God. Indeed, the very word “God” suggests to us a singular, majestic and distant reality, whereas hearing about a Father and a Son brings us back home. Yes, we can think of God in this way, through the image of a family gathered around the table, where life is shared. After all, the table, which, at the same time is an altar, is a symbol with which certain icons depict the Trinity. It is an image that speaks to us of a God of communion. Father, Son and Holy Spirit: communion. But it is not only an image; it is reality! It is reality because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that the Father poured into our hearts through Jesus (cf. Gal

4:6), makes us taste, makes us savour God’s presence: a presence that is always close, compassionate and tender. The Holy Spirit does with us what Jesus does with Nicodemus: he introduces us to the mystery of new birth, the birth of faith, of Christian life, he reveals the heart of the Father to us, and he makes us partake in God’s very life.

We could say that the invitation he extends to us is to sit at the table with God to share in his love. This is the image. This is what happens at every Mass, at the altar of the Eucharistic table, where Jesus offers himself to the Father and offers himself for us. Yes, that is how it is, brothers and sisters, our God is a communion of love: and this is how Jesus revealed him to us. And do you know how we can remember this? With the simplest gesture, which we learned as children: the sign of the cross. By tracing the cross on our body, we remind ourselves how much God loved us, to the point of giving his life for us; and we repeat to ourselves that his love envelops us completely, from top to bottom, from left to right, like an embrace that never abandons us. And at the same time, we commit ourselves to bear witness to God-as-love, creating communion in his name. Perhaps now, each one of us, and all together, let us make the sign of the cross on ourselves... [he makes the sign of the cross].

Today, then, we can ask ourselves: do we bear witness to God-as-love? Or has God-as-love become in turn a concept, something we have already heard, that no longer stirs nor provokes life? If God is love, do our communities bear witness to this? Do they know how to love? Do our communities know how to love? And our family, do we know how to love in the family? Do we always leave the door open, do we know how to welcome everyone — and I emphasize, everyone — as brothers and sisters? Do we offer everyone the food of God’s forgiveness and Gospel joy? Does one breathe the air of home, or do we resemble more closely an office or a reserved place where only the elect can enter? God is love, God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and he gave his life for us. This is why we make the sign of the cross.

And may Mary help us to experience the Church as that home of familial love, for the glory of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Jesus reveals that God sends the Son not to condemn but to save; how does this reshape our understanding of who God is and how he relates to us?



Heart: God's love is not distant but given personally and completely; where do you struggle to receive or trust that love in your own life?



Hands: If God's love is meant to be shared and made visible, how can you help create a space of welcome, mercy, and real communion this week?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.