

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

May 27, 2018

First Reading – Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22

Second Reading – Romans 8:14-17

Gospel – Revelation 1:8

My dear people of God:

Today's First Reading portrays the Uniqueness of the God of Israel. Yahweh speaks with great firmness. Due to His intervention, His unparalleled revelations, His unparalleled deeds for their deliverance, Israel became a nation.

We heard Moses, Yahweh's servant, appeal to what the Israelites had already experienced of God's grace when He chose them to be His people, when He spoke and instructed them, and in the miracles which He had wrought for their deliverance and guidance.

Yahweh's LOVE was so great and abundant and had never been showed before to any nation, or heard of since the creation of the world, and by which those who had experienced it were laid under the deepest obligations of gratitude and duty, to love and serve Him by Whom such grace had been showed. These were proofs of Yahweh's LOVE for His people.

And Yahweh gave them His statutes and His commandments to safeguard from then on their Israel's loving relationship with Him. Those commandments carried with them a promise of prosperity and long life and a sense of permanence on the land He promised to give them: *“This is why you must now know, and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other. You must keep his statutes and commandments that I enjoin on you today, that you and your children after*

you may prosper, and that you may have long life on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever."

Our beautiful Responsorial Psalm re-echoes that theme of the first reading:

"Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own".

Now, let us go to the Second Reading: My dear people of God: In the letter of Paul to the Romans, in Chapter 8, we learn that God's way of releasing us in times of pressure is to remind us of who we really are before Him. We have learned that we are no longer in Adam if we believe in Jesus Christ; we are in Christ, we are tied to Him, we belong to Him.

Paul teaches us that if we are in Christ, we are also in the Spirit. That helps us to understand that SPIRIT and the LORD JESUS belong together; it is the work of the SPIRIT to make JESUS "real" to us. So, to be in CHRIST means to be in the SPIRIT. We have the capacity of walking according to the Spirit, and thus we have power to overcome sin – but only if we want to. That is a very important matter, and one that we ought to understand clearly. Because we do not always feel that we have power to overcome sin, we need to recognize that certain facts are true, whether we feel them or not. The fact is that, because we are in CHRRIST, we are in the SPIRIT.

As Paul says in his letter to the Galatians: *"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit,"* (Galatians 5:25). That is the way to victory.

The Word of God tells us the truth -- the way to become different is to become changed at the very basis of our being by faith in Christ, so that we are TRANSFORMED. If we believe what we are, we will begin to act that way. What a TRANSFORMATION that makes!

Paul wants us to understand more fully our new identity in Jesus Christ. The more we understand that identity, and the more we believe it to be true, under all circumstances, the more quickly we will begin to act that way. In Verses 14-15, Paul uses a term he has never used before in this letter. He says, *"those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit who makes you sons. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."* (Romans 8:14-15)

For the first time in this letter, Paul uses the phrase "the sons of God." Please know that this is a generic term that includes both sexes. There is no necessity now of referring to a female person as somebody different than the male. All believers in Christ who really trust Him and have received the gift of righteousness by faith are children of God.

In the struggle that we have against sin, we are not slaves, helplessly struggling against a cruel and powerful master; we are children of the living God, with power to overcome evil - even though it is a struggle to do so. That is why Paul could say earlier in chapter 6, "*Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace,*" (Romans 6:14). In this gracious relationship, we are made and constituted children of the living God. No matter what happens to us, that is what we are. Nothing can change that. That is the place from which we start.

It is important also for us to see how we become sons of God. Paul says, "You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear." When the Spirit of God came into your heart, he did not make you a slave to fear. Remember how Paul puts that again in his second letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verse 7: "*You have not received a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind,*" (2 Timothy 1:7). That is the nature of the Holy Spirit. What did the Spirit do? We heard from Paul in today's second reading, "*You received the Spirit who makes you sons,*" (Romans 8:15).

How did you become a son of God? Well, the Spirit of God found you, and found me, and He adopted us into God's family. This is what happened to us. God has taken us out of our natural state in Adam, and, by the process of the Spirit, has made us legally children of God, and we are part of His family. But He reminds us that we are in His family by adoption so that we might never take it for granted, or forget that if we were left in our natural state we would not have a part in the family of God. It is only by the grace of God that we come into His family.

This tie with Jesus is so real that we are seen to be actually one with Him, and we share the divine nature. Peter puts it this way: "*We have been made partakers of the divine nature,*" (2 Peter 1:4). We were born into God's family by the grace of God.

We know how we treat our natural children. There is a difference between them and the neighbors' children. Our children are considerably superior, of course.

We may love the neighbors' children, they may be delightful children. We have some wonderful children in our neighborhood whom we love and admire, but they are not our children. We have a special relationship with our children. We care for them, we hurt for them, we love and protect them, we plan for them, we watch out for them. We are specially tied with them. That is what this is saying to us. God has a special relationship to us. There is a vast difference within, and because of that difference, there is a special relationship that God has with us.

There is a level of assurance of our sonship mentioned in the closing part of verse 15: "*And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'*" Abba is the Aramaic word for **FATHER**. So, by means of the Spirit, we are given an emotional response to God in which we are aware of His Fatherhood, and our soul cries out within us, "Abba, Father."

This is the deepest level of assurance. Beyond the emotions, beyond the feelings, is a deep conviction that is born of the Spirit of God Himself, an underlying awareness that we can always claim that we are part of God's family.

In Verse 17, Paul mentioned an even greater and deeper relationship: "*Now if we are children, then we are heirs -- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.* (Romans 8:17). These words introduce the very climax of this epistle. *We learn of the glory that is awaiting us and its tie with the sufferings that we go through now.*

We started in Adam; we are now, by faith, in Christ.

If we are in Christ, we are in the Spirit.

If we are in the Spirit, we can walk according to the Spirit.

If we are in the Spirit, we are therefore led by the Spirit.

If we are led by the Spirit, we are the children of God.

If we are the children of God, we are heirs of God.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that you would see the golden thread that runs all the way from Genesis right through Revelation. In subtle and sometimes open ways it is constantly hinting that something wonderful and ecstatic is coming our way.

Now, let us go to the gospel: The evangelist Matthew tells that the disciples gathered in Galilee. Please recall that Galilee is where it all started. Brothers and sisters, the setting of the Great Commissioning is in Galilee on an unnamed mountain, which brings up many different connotations. Some have proposed various theories for which mountain.

They went to the mountain that Jesus indicated. Please note that the evangelist Matthew did not name the mountain. Was it the mountain on which the Beatitudes were preached? Was it the mountain where Jesus was tempted by the devil to worship him? I could not offer a guess. All I could say is that I am happy that the mountain was not named by Matthew so that I will remember not the place, but only the incident when Jesus was asked by the devil to worship him, and when Jesus answered: *“Away with you, Satan! Scripture has it: You shall worship the Lord, your God; Him alone shall you adore”* (Matthew 4:10). The mountain can become for me a symbol of stature that will show me riches and good things below my feet but might alienate me from God. I am afraid that I might forget the give and remember only the gift.

Brothers and sisters: here in striking reversal, in chapter 28, verses 19 to 20, the very last part of Matthew’s gospel, Christ is being worshipped and has authority to commission them to GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, BAPTIZE, AND TEACH. These are strong action words: *“When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

The exact opposite of what happened by not bowing down and worshipping Satan at the mountain of temptation, Christ has been given authority from God through His death and resurrection. By Christ’s obedience, He had all authority in heaven and on the earth. Any shadow of doubt on the part of the apostles was completely covered by Christ’s proclamation of power and authority and the promise of His presence till the end of the world.

The Great Commissioning, is clear to us: we must become missionary disciples. And to comfort us, His current disciples while we are undertaking this huge task, Christ promises us that He will be with us during this entire endeavor of ours to the end of the age. Amen.