

In my head I imagine hearing your groans (which you also keep in your heads) when it's said, "Today is Trinity Sunday." What will the homily be – a triangle? a three-leafed clover? an apple? Yet the merging understanding of God as a Trinity was so important that the Church grappled with it for hundreds of years trying to be accurate; it had councils and declared heretics even among bishops who were determined to be "wrong."

I think the short passage from the letter to the Romans gives us some good insights about why it's important to understand the reality of the Trinity – what difference does it make? After all, speaking about God as a Trinity makes us distinct from all other religions, and it would have been easier to blend in than stick out like a sore thumb, because it made those Christians more suspect among the Jews and Gentiles when we were saying things like "Jesus was human and divine," or "God's own Spirit dwells in us."

First of all, the passage makes clear that God takes the initiative. God is not some distant or detached divine being. Our God is the one who draws close. It is God who adopts us (not us who choose God). It is Jesus who comes to us, not us who call Jesus down to earth. It is God who sends the Spirit, not us who make the Spirit come. Moses was making the same point to the Hebrew nation poised and ready to enter the Promised Land after a forty-year tour of the desert – "what other God has done the things that our God has done – who spoke to you, who took you safely right out of another nation and led you safely to this place, who gives you a new land for your own – who else, huh? Our God takes the initiative.

Second, we are brought into the life of our Trinity-God by adoption. This gives us an incredible status – we are children of God, God's own daughters and sons. Furthermore, if we are God's children, then we are also God's heirs. Heirs inherit what belongs to the ancestors; we will receive what belongs to God; everything that God possesses will also be ours.

Third, therefore, is that we no longer have to be afraid of God. We don't have to live in fear and insecurity; we don't have to wonder what our future holds because we already know that we will inherit everything that belongs to God. We are not God's slaves who just have to do what we're told (or else!). We are not God's puppets who God simply manipulates, pulling the strings to do what God wants. We are the adopted children who are made in the image of God.

So knowing the Trinity-God helps us to understand not only who God is, but who we are: people who are creative and life-giving; people called into intimacy with "Abba" God and with one another who are our adopted siblings; people who are redeemed, and instructed to share that good news with the world; people who are governed by God's spirit and not just acting on our own; people who are filled with God's life which is eternal.

Finally, St. Paul says that knowing the Trinity helps us to understand human suffering. Simply put, suffering is part of human existence just as Jesus himself experienced in his own humanity. Because we are invited into the life of the Trinity, that we will suffer is a reasonable expectation, along with the expectation that we will also be glorified when we are fully united with the Trinity.

So, why Trinity? Because it shows us the reality of God who takes the initiative; who adopts us; who removes all reason for fear; and who helps us accept our suffering as temporary. And it shows us the reality of who we are – adopted daughters and sons of God, redeemed and governed by God's own Spirit; and called into an intimate and everlasting relationship with the Eternal God.