

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's - The Church's Year
FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY



This festival is celebrated on the Sunday after Pentecost, because as soon as the apostles were instructed and consoled by the Holy Ghost, they began to preach openly that which Christ had taught them.

Why do we celebrate this festival?

That we may openly profess our faith in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is the first of Christian truths, the foundation of the Christian religion, and the most sublime of all mysteries; and that we may render thanks, to the Father for having created us, to the Son for having redeemed us, and to the Holy Ghost for having sanctified us.

In praise and honor of the most Holy Trinity, the Church sings at the Introit of this day's Mass:

INTROIT Blessed be the holy Trinity and undivided Unity: we will give glory to him, because he hath shown his mercy to us: (Tob. XII.) O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is thy name in all the earth! (Ps. VIII. 1.) Glory be to the Father, etc.

COLLECT Almighty, everlasting God, who hast granted to Thy servants, in the confession of the true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of Thy, majesty, to adore the Unity: grant that, by steadfastness in the same faith, we may ever be defended from all adversities. Thro'.

EPISTLE (ROM XI. 33-36.) O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and recompense shall be made him? For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things: to him be glory forever. Amen.

EXPLANATION St. Paul's exclamations, in this epistle, are caused by the inscrutable judgment of God in rejecting the Jews and calling the Gentiles. The Church makes use of these words to express her admiration for the incomprehensible mystery of the most Holy Trinity, which surpasses our understanding, and yet is the worthy object of our faith, hope and love. Although neither angels nor men can fathom this mystery, it cannot be difficult for the sound human intellect to believe it, since it is indubitably and evidently revealed by God, and we, in many natural and human things, accept for true and certain much that we cannot comprehend. Let us submit our intellect, therefore, and yield ourselves up to faith; as there was indeed a time when men were martyred, when even persons of all ages and conditions preferred to die rather than to abandon this faith, so let us rather wait until our faith is changed to contemplation, until we see the Triune God, face to face, as He is, and in the sight of that countenance become eternally happy. Thither should all our hopes, wishes, and desires be directed, and we should cease all fruitless investigations, endeavoring by humble faith and active love, to prove worthy of the beatific vision; for if we do not love Him who is our all, our last end and aim, and lovingly desire Him, we will have to hope of one day possessing Him.

ASPIRATION O incomprehensible, Triune God! O Abyss of wisdom, power, and goodness! To Thee all glory and adoration! In Thee I lose myself; I cannot contain Thee, do Thou, contain me. I believe in Thee, though I cannot comprehend Thee; do Thou increase my faith; I hope in Thee, for Thou art the source of all good; do Thou enliven my hope; I love Thee, because Thou art worthy, of all love; do Thou inflame ever more my love, that in Thy love I may live and die. Amen.

GOSPEL (Matt. XXVIII. 18-20.) At that time Jesus said to His disciples: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore; teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.

EXPLANATION Christ being God had from all eternity the same power that His Father had; being man, He had this same power by the union of His divinity with His humanity, and on account of the infinite merits of His passion. In virtue of this power, He said to His apostles, before the ascension, that, as His Heavenly Father had sent Him, even so He sent them to all nations, without exception, to teach all that He had commanded, and to receive them, by means of baptism, into the Church; at the same time He promised to be with them to the end of

the world, that is, that He would console them in suffering, strengthen them in persecution, preserve them from error, and always protect them and their successors, the bishops and priests, even unto the consummation of the world.

(See Instruction on the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church for the first Sunday after Easter.)

ASPIRATION Be with us, O Lord, for without Thee our pastors cannot produce fruit, nor their hearers profit anything from their words. Be with us always, for we always need Thy help. All power is given to Thee, Thou hast then the right to command, and we are bound to obey Thy commands which by Thy Church Thou hast made known to us. This we have promised in baptism, and now before Thee we renew those vows. Grant now that those promises which without Thee we could not have made, and without Thee cannot keep, may be fulfilled in our actions. Leave us not to ourselves, but be Thou with us, and make us obedient to Thee, that by cheerful submission to Thee true may receive happiness.

INSTRUCTION ON THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. XXVIII. 19.)

Is baptism a Sacrament?

Yes because in it the baptized person receives the grace of God by means of an external sign, instituted by Christ.

What is this external sign?

The immersion, or the pouring of water, accompanied by the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy ghost:"

What does the baptismal grace effect?

It removes original and actual sin; causing man to be spiritually born again, made a new creature, a child of God, and joint heir with Christ.

How many kinds of baptism are there?

There are three kinds: The baptism of desire, which consists in a heartfelt desire for the baptism of water, joined with a perfect love of God, or a perfect sorrow for sins committed, and with the purpose to obey all God's commands; the baptism of blood, which is received by those who suffer martyrdom for the true faith, without having received the baptism of water; the baptism of water, which is the Sacrament of Baptism.

What do the different ceremonies of this Sacrament signify?

They are the external signs of the effects which baptism produces inwardly upon the soul, and should impress us with deep reverence for this Sacrament.

Why is it customary to have a godfather or godmother?

That there may be a witness that the child has received baptism; that in case of the death of the parents, the sponsors may assume their place, and have the child instructed in the truths of religion. St. Augustine speaking of the duties of sponsors, very beautifully says: "They should use all care, often to admonish in true love their godchildren that they may strive to lead a pure life; they should warn them against all detraction, all improper songs, and keep them from pride, envy, anger, and revenge; they should watch over them that they may preserve the Catholic faith, attend the church services, listen to the word of God, and obey their parents and their pastors." Sponsors must therefore be true believers, and of unquestionable morality. No one, unless a Catholic can be chosen for a sponsor, because one who is not a Catholic would not instruct the child in the Catholic faith, or see that others do it; but would be more likely, as experience shows, to draw the child over to error.

What results from this sponsorship?

In baptism, as in confirmation, a spiritual affinity originates between, the sponsors, the one who baptizes or confirms, with the one baptized or confirmed, and with the parents, so that, by a decision of the Church a godfather or godmother cannot contract marriage with any of these parties, unless the impediment is removed by dispensation, that is, by a special permission received from a spiritual superior. But the sponsors have no spiritual relationship to each other.

Why has the Church instituted this spiritual relation?

From reverence for these holy Sacraments, and that by this spiritual bond the sponsors may be more closely connected with their godchildren, and be incited earnestly to discharge their obligation.

Why must the person to be baptized wait at the entrance of the church?

To indicate that until he has thrown off the yoke of sin, and submitted to Christ, and His authority, he is unworthy to enter, because baptism is the door of God's grace, to the kingdom of heaven, and the communion of saints.

Why does the person receive a saint's name?

That by this name he may be enrolled, through baptism, into the number of Christians whom St. Paul calls saints; that he may have a patron and intercessor, and that the saint, whose name he bears, may be his model and example, by which he may regulate his own life.

Why does the priest breathe in the face of the one to be baptized?

In imitation of Christ who breathed on His apostles when He gave them the Holy Ghost. (John XX. 22.) St. Chrysostom says that in baptism supernatural life is given to the soul as God imparted natural life to Adam by breathing on him.

Why does the priest impose his hand so many times upon the head of the person to be baptized?

To show that he is now the property of God and is under His protection.

What do the many exorcisms signify?

That the evil spirit who previous to baptism holds the person in bondage is now commanded in the name of God to depart, that a dwelling-place may be prepared for the Holy Ghost.

Why is the person so often signed with the sign of the cross?

To signify that through the power of Christ's merits and of His death on the cross, baptism washes away original sin; that the person is to be henceforth a follower of Christ the Crucified, and as such must fight valiantly under the banner of the cross, against the enemies of his salvation, and must follow Christ on the way of the cross even unto death.

What does the salt signify which is put into the person's mouth?

It is an emblem of Christian wisdom and of preservation from the corruption of sin.

Why are his ears and nose touched with spittle?

That as Christ put spittle on the eyes of the man born blind, thus restoring his sight, so by baptism, the spiritual blindness of the soul is removed, and his mind receives light to behold heavenly wisdom. Also, as St. Ambrose says, the candidate is thus instructed to open his ears to priestly admonitions, and become a sweet odor of Christ.

Why does the priest ask: "Dust thou renounce the devil; and all his works, and all his pomps?"

That the Christian may know that his vocation requires him to renounce and combat the devil, his works, suggestions and pomps. Thus St. Ambrose very beautifully addresses a person just baptized: "When the priest asked: 'Dust thou renounce the devil and all his works,' what didst thou reply? 'I renounce them.' 'Dost thou renounce the world, its lusts and its pomps?' 'I renounce them.' Think of these promises, and let them never depart from thy mind. Thou hast given thy hand-writing to the priest, who stands for Christ; when thou hast given thy note to a man, thou art bound to him. Now thy word is not on earth but preserved in heaven; say not thou knowest nothing of this promise; this exculpates thee no better than the excuse of a soldier who in time of battle should say he knew not that by becoming a soldier he would have to fight."

Why is the person anointed on the shoulder and breast with holy oil?

As St. Ambrose and Chrysostom explain this is done to strengthen him to fight bravely for Christ; as the combatants of old anointed themselves with oil before they entered the arena, so is he anointed, on the breast, that he may gain courage and force, bravely to combat the world, the flesh, and the devil, and on the shoulder, that he may be strong to bear constantly and untiringly, the yoke of Christ's commands, and pursue the toilsome course of life in unwavering fidelity to God and His holy law.

Why are, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed said at baptism?

That, when the child is a grown person an acknowledgment of faith may by this means be made in the face of the Church; when children are baptized, these prayers are said by the sponsors who are thus reminded to see that their godchildren are well instructed in these as in all other Christian truths.

Why does the priest expressly ask the person if he will be baptized?

Because as man, through Adam, of his own free will obeyed the devil, so now when he would be received among the number of Christ's children, he must, to obtain salvation, of his own free will obey the precepts of God.

Why is water poured three times upon the person's head?

This is done, as St. Gregory the Great writes, in token that man after this thrice-repeated ablution rises from the death of sin, as Christ, after His three days' burial, rose from the dead. (Rom. VI. 4.5.) In early times the candidate for baptism was immersed three times in the water. For many reasons this custom has been abolished.

Why is the person anointed on the top of the head with chrism?

This anointing is, so to speak, the crown of the young Christian. As in the Old Law the kings were anointed, (I Kings X. 1.) as Jesus is the Anointed One, and as the Apostle St. Peter calls the Christians a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy people, (I Peter II. 9.) so the baptized by means of this unction is embodied in Christ, the Anointed One, and participates in His priesthood and kingly dignity. What an exalted position is the Christian's! He is the anointed one of the Lord, and in a spiritual sense a priest, because he constantly brings himself to the Lord God as a pleasing sacrifice in prayer, mortification, &c. He is king when he rules over his inclinations, submits them to reason, and reason to the Lord. Besides this he is king by the claims which, through baptism, he possesses to the kingdom of heaven. Through the chrism he becomes the blessed temple of the Holy Ghost, the sacred vessel which in time, through communion, will contain the precious body and blood of Christ. How does he desecrate this temple when, by grievous sin, he tramples this exalted dignity under his feet and stains the temple of the Holy Ghost, his soul!

What does the white robe signify?

The holy Fathers teach that this represents the glory to which by baptism we are born again; the purity and beauty with which the soul, having been washed from sin in the Sacrament of baptism, is adorned, and the innocence which the baptized should preserve through his whole life.

Why is a lighted candle placed in his hand?

It is an emblem of the Christian doctrine which preserves the baptized from the darkness of error, ignorance, and sin, illumines his understanding, and leads him safely in the way of virtue; it represents the flame of love for God and our neighbor which the baptized should henceforth continually carry, like the five prudent virgins, (Matt. XXV. 13.) on the path to meet the Lord, that when his life is ended he may be admitted to the eternal wedding feast; it signifies also the light of good example which he should keep ever burning.

Who is the minister of this sacrament?

The ordinary minister is the priest of the Church; but in case of necessity any layman or woman, even the father or mother can baptize. Parents, however, should not baptize their own child unless no other Catholic can be procured. The reason why lay persons are permitted to baptize is that no one may be deprived of salvation.

What must be observed particularly in private baptism?

The person who baptizes must be careful to use only natural water, which must be poured on the child's head saying at the same time the words: I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; having at the same time the intention of baptizing as the Church does, in the manner required by Christ.

INSTRUCTION ON THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

All the graces and dignities which we receive in baptism, God secures to us for the future, only on condition that we keep our baptismal vows. Every Christian in baptism makes a bond with God through the meditation of Christ who has sealed it with His blood. This bond consists, on man's part, in the promise to renounce forever the devil, all his works and all his pomps, that is, constantly to suppress the threefold lust of the eyes, the flesh and the pride of life, by which the devil leads us to sin, and to believe all that God has revealed, and all that His holy Church proposes to our belief, and diligently and properly to make use of all the means of salvation. On the part of God this bond consists in cleansing us from all sin, in bestowing the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in adopting us as His children, and in the assurance to the inheritance of heaven. This bond will never be broken by God who is infinitely true and faithful, but it is often violated by weak and fickle man. In compliance with the desire of the Church we should often reflect upon it, and from time to time renew it in the sight of God. This should be done particularly before receiving the holy Sacrament of Confirmation, before first Communion, on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost, at the blessing of baptismal water, on the anniversaries of our baptism and confirmation, before making any solemn vow, before entering into matrimony and when in danger of death. This renewal of baptismal vows can be made in the following manner: Placing ourselves in the presence of God, we kneel down, fold our hands, and say with fervent devotion:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born and suffered for us.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

I renounce the devil; all his works and all his pomps.

Christ Jesus ! With Thee I am united, to Thee alone I cling, Thee only will I follow, for Thee I desire to live and die. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

DOCTRINE ON THE HOLY TRINITY

What is God?

GOD is the most perfect being, the highest, best Good, who exists, from all eternity, by whom heaven and earth are create, and from whom all things derive and hold life and existence, for of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things. (Rom. XI. 36.)

What is the Blessed Trinity?

The Blessed Trinity is this one God who is one in nature and threefold in person, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Is each of these three persons God?

Yes, because each of them has the divine nature and substance.

Are they not three Gods?

No, because all three of these persons have one and the same divine nature and substance.

Is any one of these three persons older, mightier, or greater than the other?

By, no means, they are all three from eternity entirely equal to each other in divine omnipotence greatness and majesty, and must, therefore, be equally adored and venerated.

Ought one to give himself up to the investigation of the most Blessed Trinity?

No; "For," says the saintly Bishop Martin, "the mystery of the Trinity cannot be comprehended by the human intellect, no one however eloquent can exhaust it; if entire books were written about it, so that the whole world were filled with them, yet the unspeakable wisdom of God would not be expressed. God who is indescribable, can in no way be described. When the human mind ceases to speak of Him, then it but begins to speak." Therefore the true Christian throws his intellect under the feet of faith, not seeking to understand that which the human mind can as little comprehend, as a tiny hole in the sand can contain the immeasurable sea. An humble and active faith will make us worthy some day in the other world, to see with ' the greatest bliss this mystery as it is, for in this consists eternal life, that by a pious life we may glorify and know the only true God, Christ Jesus His Son, and the Holy Ghost.

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