Triune God and Human History

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Trinity Sunday
Sunday Readings for June 7, 2009 for Cycle B:
Dt 4:32-40; Ps 33; Rm 8:14-17; Mt 28:16-20

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At each stage of the mystery celebrated in the Church year, we acknowledge that our salvation, indeed the meaning of human history, is rooted in the greater Mystery of God's triune inner life. When the Father sent the Son into the world, he took human nature through the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35). When Jesus gave his life in obedience to the Father's will and out of love for humankind, he promised that the Spirit of truth would continue his work in the Church (Jn 14:25-26; 16:12-15; 20:22). So that Christ's mission would be completed he prayed: "May they all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). The harmony and peace that should be characteristic of every Christian parish and family is the foundation for success in the Church's great task of offering faith to people of good will.

For 150 years Europe and eventually the entire world has been locked in a profound struggle, a war wherein atheistic communism has tried to bury the Church -- and western democracy. What a drama we have witnessed over the past few decades! Many countries, drawn into the Soviet orbit by means foul or fair, have challenged their erstwhile leaders and declared that the system is bankrupt. Why? Not merely because arms production and a false hierarchy of values deprived people of life's necessities. The additional and greater tragedy was the concerted effort to stunt the growth of the human spirit.

The secular press in Europe credits Pope John Paul II as the key actor in this drama. Of course the pundits here look elsewhere! Because he was among the composers of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, it is worthwhile to review that document's section on atheism (#19-21).

The remedy which must be applied to atheism is to be sought in a proper presentation of the Church's teachings as well as in the integral life of the Church and her members. For it is the function of the Church, led by the Holy Spirit who renews and purifies her ceaselessly, to make God the Father and his Incarnate Son present and in a sense visible (Gaudium et spes #21).

Those who do not know God, for whatever reason, will not likely find that a theoretical presentation of monotheism satisfies their yearnings. The Church must present an understanding of God, not only as Creator and Unmoved Mover, but as Lord of history. In contrast to political systems that either crush the individual or extol the person in isolation, the biblical vision of life stresses the place of the individual within the community. There the person exercises his or her rights and privileges and fulfills the concomitant responsibilities. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt so that they would be free to serve the one God and grow into fuller faith and greater
fidelity. The Book of Deuteronomy depicts both the challenges and the benefits of this freedom. Exclusive commitment to the one God is shown through keeping his commandments "so that you and your children after you may prosper..." (Dt 4:40).

As risen Lord, Jesus possesses full authority in heaven and on earth. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, the Church cooperates in his mission to show the way, teach the truth and bring the fullness of life to humankind (see Jn 14:6). "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations (way). Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (life). Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you (truth)." This "great commission" roots the Church's life in the Trinitarian Mystery, just as John's Gospel does. The mission itself must be understood, not only as teaching and administering the sacraments, important as these tasks are, but of building a society wherein the truth is practiced in love. To accomplish this integrity of life that the Gospel demands (see Jn 17:21), the Church and her members need to be renewed and purified by the Holy Spirit and guided by Emmanuel (Mt 1:23; 18:20 and 28:20). Then our prayer "Abba!" will truly bear witness to humanity that our common origin and goal is the Triune God.