Holy Trinity Year C

This feast is always celebrated on the eighth Sunday after Easter. The doctrine of the Trinity (one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit) is not expounded in any direct way in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is an insight drawn from the ways in which God's nature is revealed. The oldest doctrinal formulation of the Church's belief in the Trinity is in the Apostle's Creed. In twelve articles, it was taught by the apostles. It existed essentially since the second century. The mysteries of the faith are always difficult to teach but legend has it that St. Patrick used a shamrock with its three leaflets on one stem to represent the three persons in one God.

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

On the plains of Moab, God charges Moses, now close to death, once more to proclaim the Law which he received through the revelation at Mount Sinai. Moses is addressing a new generation of Israelites, survivors of the Baal of Peor incident where the men of Israel had indulged in sexual immorality with Moabite women and had bowed down and sacrificed before their gods (baals). As a result of this incident a plague was unleashed against the Israelites, which was stopped only when Phineas, grandson of Aaron thrust his spear through an Israelite man and his Moabite concubine. Twenty-four thousand died in the plague. It was at this point that the line of the priesthood passed from Levites to the line of Phineas. (Numbers 25:13) The words of the covenant in Deuteronomy are more lax than the words given at Mount Sinai as Moses makes accommodation for their sinfulness. This passage is part of the prologue to the giving of the Law to all of Israel. It speaks of the special relationship between God and Israel, linking the uniqueness of Israel's vocation with the uniqueness of God.

Moses said to the people:
32. "Ask now of the days of old, before your time, ever since God created man upon the earth; ask from one end of the sky to the other: Did anything so great ever happen before? Was it ever heard of? Moses is encouraging the people to be mindful of the many ways in which God has appeared in their midst starting with being the sustaining Creator.
33. Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking from the midst of fire, On Mt. Sinai at the giving of the commandments.(Ex. 19:18) as you did, and live? The people are being reminded by Moses that God loved them so much that an entire nation heard His voice spreading from the fire on a mountain top. Here Moses emphasizes that the same God who is the Creator also is the worker of signs and wonders.
34. Or did any god venture to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, with strong hand and outstretched arm, and by great terrors, all of which the Lord, your God, did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? The Israelites are reminded that they were freed from the bondage of slavery, not by their own power, but rather by the power of God. Yahweh ridiculed two of Egypt's chief gods: the Nile god when he turned the river into blood, and the frog goddess when he multiplied frogs so that they infested Egypt's houses. He then sent gnats, biting flies, a livestock disease carried by the flies, a related human skin disease and the worst hailstorm in Egyptian history.

Then the wheat, spelt, and fruit trees that survived the hail were devoured by locusts in plague number eight and a sandstorm blew in so thick that the sun was obscured and the land was reduced to darkness for three days which was a terrible insult to Egypt's greatest god: Ra, the sun. Finally, every firstborn son of man and beast that was not in a home marked with the blood of the Passover lamb, was struck dead. After that the people that God chose to be His own were led thru the Red Sea to freedom.

39. 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. This is the heart of this message: there is only ONE GOD! The concept that: "The Lord is God and there is no other god besides him" is repeated frequently in Deuteronomy. It is incompatible with worshipping many divinities adored by other peoples.

40. 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." Moses establishes a cause-and-effect relationship: Keep the commandments and your children will prosper. So much depends on fidelity—prosperity, long life, and land. The fact that God is just in His treatment of man, rewarding him or punishing him, sooner or later, for the good or evil which he does, is a message that runs through both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the emphasis is on reward or punishment in this present life on earth, while in the New Testament more emphasis is put on divine retribution in the future life in heaven.

Romans 8:14-17

Paul probably wrote this from Corinth in early 58. Rome was the center of the entire world and the church was apparently made up mostly of converted gentiles. Today St. Paul tells us that it is through the Spirit that the Christian becomes a child of God, destined for glory.

Brothers and sisters:

14. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

15. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery By this he means an attitude, a disposition or a mentality that a slave would have. to fall back into fear, but you received a Spirit of adoption, Adoption in the Roman culture was looked at with great respect. It was made difficult by the father's power over his family, which was actually the power of life and death. It was called "Patria Potestas." In regard to his father, a Roman son never came of age. Adoption from one family to another was a very difficult and serious step. In adoption a person had to pass from one "Patria Potestas" to another. Paul, being a Roman citizen himself, knew the correlation between Roman adoption and being adopted into God's family. In the Roman adoption the adopted person lost all rights and debts in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. In the most binding legal way, he got a new father. Paul tells us about this part of Roman culture so that we today can see the incredible significance of what it means to be adopted into God's family and to be adopted by "Abba," our heavenly Father. When a person enters into the Christian

family, he gains all the rights of a legitimate child and he becomes a full heir to his new father's estate. He also gains all the privileges and responsibilities of a child in God's family. You and I no longer need to be cringing, fearful slaves. Instead, we are the master's children. We receive this wondrous gift in our sacrament of Baptism and we share in great treasures, such as, being his children, receiving his forgiveness, and the incredible gift of eternal life. Our Father, or "Abba" which means "daddy," encourages us to ask him for whatever we need. For Paul, the divine adoption of the believer takes place in two stages: first, our souls are raised to new life and filled with the GRACE of divine sonship at Baptism and at the time of death, our bodies will be raised to new life and filled with the GLORY of divine sonship . Divine adoption results from an infusion of the divine life of the Spirit. The gift of sonship once possessed in part by Israel is now granted in full to all nations united with Christ through faith and Baptism. While Christ alone is the natural Son of God, we are made to share in his filial life as adopted "sons in the Son." through whom we cry, "Abba, Father!" "Abba" is Aramaic for "Father." It is an intimate term of address that Jesus uses in his own prayer life. The Spirit makes the prayer of Jesus the prayer of all God's children as they call to the Father for grace and help in times of need.(9)

16. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit We are not just observers, we are participants! that we are children of God, Msgr. Escriva writes that "We've got to be convinced that God is always near us. We live as though he were far away, in the heavens high above, and we forget that he is also continually by our side. He is there like a loving Father. God loves us more than all the mothers in the world can love their children: helping us, inspiring us, blessing and forgiving."

17. and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, Christ, the true son, has already received a share of the Father's estate (glory). The Christian is destined to share that glory too one day. The key is to suffer with Christ in order to share his inheritance. if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Note the connection between Christ's passion and his resurrection.

Matthew 28:16-20

When someone is leaving us, their last words are very important to us. Jesus left the disciples with these last words of instruction. This is called the Great Commission because here Jesus commissions the disciples to carry on his mission by doing three things: Go to all nations and make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Trinity, and teach them all that Jesus has commanded.

16. The eleven disciples This refers to the 12 minus Judas. went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. The disciples' movement takes place in accord with Jesus' prophecy in 26:32: "But after I am raised up, I will go to Galilee ahead of you" and also the message of the angel in 28:7: "He has been raised from the dead and now goes ahead of you to Galilee, where you will see him" and the words of Jesus to the women at the tomb to tell the "brothers that they are to go to Galilee." There are similar references in Mark 16:7 and Luke 24:4-6 and the picnic in John 21 takes place in Galilee.

17. When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. This short passage is of great importance for seeing the risen Christ, the disciples adore him, worshipping him as God. Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem. In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering. The apostles' faith in the Resurrection came from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.
18. Then Jesus approached and said to them, Only after defeating the real enemies of God's people—sin and death—in his Resurrection does Jesus make this triumphant declaration to his apostles: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. This did not mean that it was his as the Son of God, for that belonged already to him by nature. Rather, it was a power that he had merited by his Passion and his death and which was foretold by Daniel where he beholds "a son of man" coming to God on the clouds of heaven where he is given a royal "kingdom" and "everlasting dominion" over all nations. Daniel's vision takes historical shape with Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension to the Father. The Resurrection gave him power upon earth conquering both its sins and its death, so the Ascension gives him power in heaven to act as mediator between God and man. The title, "son of man" is used 82 times in the gospels and only by Jesus himself. The Father vindicates Jesus at his Resurrection and gives him full dominion over creation.
19. Go, therefore, The word "therefore" is very important as it means go "because" all power in heaven and on earth has been given to me! We do not go alone! We do not go without power or without help! and make disciples of all nations, Christ's commission to evangelize and catechize the world fulfills God's covenant oath to Abraham that "all the nations" would be blessed. This is a commission that is without limit for by the authority of Christ they may make disciples of all nations; there is no longer any question of the restriction of the mission to Jews. Since the eleven could not possibly get to all the nations in their lifetimes, we know that the commission was meant to be passed on. The apostles understood that this mission entrusted to them by Jesus would continue to the end of time and therefore, the apostles took care to appoint successors. baptizing them The Sacrament of Baptism incorporates Christians into the divine family of the Trinity as children of God. This is done in the NAME of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This expression has become the normal baptismal formula for the Church. in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Although this is not the only place in the Bible where the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are named together, it is the only place where the liturgical phrase "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" is used. The Sign of the Cross is an important part of personal and public prayer. It originated in the earliest days of Christianity and so it is centuries old. It is the first sign made on us at Baptism and the last sign made as we pass to our future life. It's a vital part of our liturgical prayer and the sacraments. With the Sign of the Cross we begin and end our prayers.
20. teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. The word "command" does not affirm the establishment of a new Law, but of a new way of life. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." The promise was without limit; it would endure until the end of the world. The risen Christ is present in many ways to his Church: in his word, in his Church's prayer, "where two or three are

gathered in my name," in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned, in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But he is present MOST ESPECIALLY in the Eucharist.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken and Marie Finn, (2) "The Navarre Bible: Pentateuch," (3) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers:2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (4) "The Story Of Stories" by Karen Lee-Thorp, (5) "Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers: 1991" by Graziano Marcheschi with Nancy Seitz Marcheschi, (6) "Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers:1997" by Lawrence E. Mick, (7) "The Letter To The Romans" by William Barclay, (8) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letters of St. Paul to the Galatians & Ephesians" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (9) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letter of St. Paul to the Romans" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (10) "The Navarre Bible: Romans And Galatians," (11) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (12)
"Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (13)"Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew," (14) "The Navarre Bible: St. Matthew," (15) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (16) "Life Of Christ" by Fulton J. Sheen, (17) "Catholic Source Book" Edited by Rev. Peter Klein, (18) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn, (19) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2006" by Martin Connell, and (20) Online article Praying in words and signs: The Sign of the Cross by Victor Hoagland, C.P.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.