

+ J. M. J.

A priest I know tells a story about a man who was in a great deal of pain. His pastor asked him why he refused to have surgery to correct his painful condition. I forget the specifics, but the man explained that after the surgery he would need someone to change his bandages with regularity, and there was no one to change his bandages. The priest asked why can't your wife change the bandages. The man replied that his wife could not stand the sight of blood and he would never ask her to do such a thing.

Several months passed and that man was looking much improved. Obviously he had had the surgery; his pastor asked the obvious question, who was changing his bandages. He explained that his wife agreed to learn what to do and at the regular intervals forwent her fears and repulsions and out of love for her husband dressed his wounds.

We are all on a quest to find meaning in our lives, so a story such as this moves our heart. Many people would claim that it is science that explains the meaning of our world, but science is a funny thing. With our best technology we have trouble predicting the weather, we cannot prevent illness and disease, we cannot be assured that a catastrophe will not strike, and we certainly have trouble plugging a hole 5000 feet below the ocean surface. Science and material things don't give the world meaning. There are many stories of well-to-do people who have the world and their life is empty. The world has meaning when we know that we are loved.

That's a funny introduction to the solemnity that we celebrate today, the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, but if go to the core of what we believe we arrive at basic absolute truths that everything else in existence is contingent upon. This is they, that God is a unity of three Persons loving each other. The Son is eternally born of the Father and is so loved that the Father gives the Son everything he has, and when we talk about everything and God that is a boundless sum that we will never fully comprehend. In the reading from the Gospel we heard Jesus say **"Everything that the Father has is mine"** (John 16:15). The

Son in perfect love returns all he has to the Father. That love between Father and Son is so perfect it is a third Person, which is why we recite in the creed the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

This perfect love existed before everything that we observe in our world. In fact it was out of this love that through the Son God created all things, and if that is the order love first and creation arises out of love it means that love is more real than any created thing or any of the things that we sillily cling to. Let me repeat that. Love is more real than any other thing in this life that we take for granted because of the mystery of the Trinity. And so, because love is the absolute St. Paul can boldly say "Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8). In fact love is so strong that it even conquers death, a fact we are reminded at every Catholic funeral liturgy, which is why we continue to love those dear ones who have died in Christ.

Love by its nature, because of who it is, is about self sacrificial giving. We could not have figured it out on our own. That is why St. John says "Love, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10) This love makes a demand on us. "If God so loved us, we also must love one another." (1 John 4:11).

In our year of gracious living we have been talking about sharing. We share because God has shared his life with us. We do the same with our lives to the point that we are called to love, to give when we don't want to or feel like it. It is why we change our husband's bandages even when we are repulsed by the sight of blood. It is why when someone offends us no matter how serious the matter is, we are to forgive because Jesus forgave every sin on that cross. It is why even in the littlest things we put aside our will to be with another, which may mean turning off the television, forgoing shopping, or giving up whatever so that we may concretely demonstrate our love to another.

It is when those other things that we think are so real fail, when we approach the end of our lives that we realize what is most real, what matters most is that we have been loved and that we are surrounded by those we have loved. That is because God, who is an eternal exchange of love created us in his

image.¹ St. Peter reminds us in scripture “let your love for one another be intense” (1 Pet. 4:8). Let us then go out into the world and love with that intensity for which we were created for.

¹ CCC 221.