



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Homily

[*Deuteronomy* 4:32-34, 39-40; *Psalms* 33; *Romans* 8:14-17; *Matthew* 28:16-20]

Well, the big news this week is obviously the announcement by the Alberta government of what is called a plan for re-opening. As we now know it will happen in stages, with the transition between each dependent upon our performance in terms of vaccination rates, hospitalization statistics, and so on. Here in Alberta, there are three stages; in other provinces there may be more. The term “re-opening” tells us that this is the plan by which we shall come out from the lockdown we’ve been experiencing to varying degrees and gradually get our lives back.

The scriptural texts for this Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity announce a re-opening strategy designed by God. Its aim is to lead us out of the self-imposed lockdown resulting from sin, in order to give back to us the life we lost by turning away from God. It is a plan for re-opening to the fullness of life, not as we have known it but as God envisions it, an opening to eternal life in the communion of our Triune God. As we ponder the passages given to us for this mass, we see that this, too, is a “staged” re-opening plan. Let’s be careful to observe in the texts that, whereas our COVID-related strategies are dependent entirely upon our own actions, God Himself takes the lead as the principal actor in His plan to lead us to life. It is also important to see how God, through the unfolding of this plan, makes Himself known to us. When you love someone, you want the beloved to know you. God loves us beyond imagining, and so gradually revealed to His people the truth about Himself, which otherwise could never be fully grasped by limited human intelligence. So, let’s take careful note of how God, precisely through the “staged re-opening”, made known to His people His innermost mystery.

In the first reading from *Deuteronomy*, we hear Moses speak of God’s action in what we now see as stage one of God’s re-opening plan. In a beautiful summary of the divine action, Moses recalls to the people how God took the initiative, spoke to His people from the burning bush, chose them from all nations to be His beloved people, and led them by great deeds of power out of slavery in Egypt. What is decisive for Moses in all of this is how, in His wondrous words and deeds, God was actually revealing Himself to the people and bringing them to an understanding of the truth of God. That truth, revealed in stage one, is that there is only one God. The ancient Hebrews lived at a time when the peoples of the world believed in multiple gods.

Now, at stage one, they are brought to the awareness that all those “others” are simply false. There is only one God. Here, God’s self-revelation is ordered to leading the people out of the lock-down imposed by darkened understanding toward the realization that this one and only God is the author of all that is, and that God loves them beyond imagining and wills that they enjoy life in its fullness as His people. To make that life possible, Moses recalls, God gave them the commandments to follow.

The four Gospels recount history’s entrance into stage two, the coming of Jesus Christ as Saviour. Humanity didn’t do especially well in keeping the commandments. In fact, our infidelity throughout stage one kept us locked down in our separation from God. Now, we’ve been told that failure to do what we must in our provincial re-opening strategy will prevent our moving from one stage to the next. How different from this is God’s re-opening plan! God gave us His Son, moved us into stage two, even though we were still disobedient and persistent in sin, in spite of the fact that we did not do as we were told. Here, we see clearly that God is moved solely by His immeasurable love for us. In no way can we merit the gift of divine mercy. Yet it is not only this wondrous love of God that is made manifest in stage two. As in the first stage, God is acting to reveal Himself to the people He loves. His self-revelation expands in stage two. By the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God reveals Himself as, yes, One, but also Triune: One God, Three Persons. Jesus himself makes that explicit in the text from St. Matthew, when he gives the great commission to the Apostles to go forth and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

That commission moves us into stage three, which we could call the time of the Church, founded by Christ to carry on his mission in the world under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. That mission is to announce what Jesus Christ has definitively revealed - the truth of God and His “re-opening plan” - and to invite all people to respond, to “get with the plan” as it were, by faith and Baptism. In this stage, there is yet a further self-revelation by God. Having revealed in the first stage that he is One, and in the second that he is a communion of love, a Trinity of persons, now in stage three God reveals His desire to draw us into His very life, both now and for eternity.

This is what St. Paul is explaining in the passage from *Romans*. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, God has united us with His Son Jesus and so adopted us as His very own sons and daughters. By the movement of the Holy Spirit, we can dare to call upon God as our *Abba*, our Father. And notice carefully the conclusion St. Paul draws for us: if we are God’s children in Christ, that means we are also heirs with Christ to the promised gift of eternal life, what we can call here stage four. Humanity, long held in lockdown due to its own sin, can look forward in

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hope to that final stage in the plan by which God is acting to re-open His people to the fullness of life.

Right now, many of us are looking forward to family hugs or some travel as we move through the stages of our provincial strategy. That is good and important, and part of getting our lives back, as we say. Today's Solemnity reminds us that there is an even greater "re-opening plan" unfolding in history, one of God's own making that fills us with hope for a life infinitely beyond anything we could bring about ourselves: an eternal sharing in the life of our Trine God.

We are given a taste of that sharing even now, through our communion with Christ in this Eucharist. May the grace of this sacrament move us further out of sin's lockdown, strengthen us for mission, and advance us in accord with God's plan to re-open the world to everlasting life.

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