



## SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



### Trinity

**June 15, 2003**

By Prior Paul Kidner

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, the central mystery of Christian faith and life. Those two words "faith and life" are important. It's not just a question of believing that in the one true God there are, in some mysterious way, three Persons, distinct but equal, whom we invoke as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christianity means living the Holy Trinity. What does that mean? The Catholic Catechism calls the Holy Spirit "the anointing of Christ" and therefore "it is Christ who, as head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world." The Catechism continues: "Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body." So the Catechism teaches that through our sharing in the life of the Holy Trinity we participate in the mission of Christ to bring salvation to the world.

Some fifteen hundred years ago St. Cyril of Alexandria wrote: "All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father's and his own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us ... and makes all appear as one in him. For just as the power of Christ's sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity." Those were St. Cyril's words, and the Church's teaching down the ages has been that our faith in God the Holy Trinity brings us into a personal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus said in today's gospel: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." By baptism each of us has been incorporated into the mystery of God, the Holy Trinity. We were not filled with a doctrine at baptism; we are gifted with the personal experience of God.

Our faith in the Blessed Trinity is affirmed each time we make the Sign of the Cross. The words we use are drawn directly from the gospel mission just quoted where Jesus sends out his disciples to preach and baptize "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." The external ritual accompanying these words, as we trace with our hand the upright and horizontal beams of the Cross on our body, reminds us that it is through the Cross of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, that the life of the Trinity is opened to us, and that the Cross is the only



## SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



means by which we can follow Christ our Savior and Lord to enter into the eternal life of the Trinity. Every time we make the sign of the Cross we do so with faith, hope and charity. Because of the Cross of Jesus we can receive the Spirit of Adoption, by means of which we can literally call God "Father," as St. Paul explained in today's second reading. It's a happy and appropriate coincidence that this year Fathers Day falls on the feast of the Holy Trinity. We begin this process of experiencing the Spirit through a commitment to suffering service in the footsteps of Christ. Thus the Sign of the Cross is an affirmation of our willingness to suffer for the sake of our Lord and Redeemer, after his example.

The doctrine of the trinity is an attempt by limited human beings like ourselves to use limited words and concepts to speak of a reality that is infinitely beyond our modes of human expression. Today's feast focuses on the way the church has gradually, through the centuries, learned to speak about God. But our vocation as Christians is not to comprehend the Trinity. We are invited to experience it, to live the life of God. Christian faith is an invitation to a sharing in the life of the Triune God and a sharing in the mission of Christ to bring salvation to the world.

+