

## TRINITY SUNDAY 2022

As Christians, we believe in One God but Three Persons: Father - Creator, Son - Redeemer, and Holy Spirit - Sanctifier. This is a mystery not intended to be solved but to live with, like Mary as she *pondered all things in her heart*. Throughout the centuries our understanding of the Holy Trinity continues to grow, develop and deepen, even now with our present terms for all three: ***Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier***.

In the seminary the best explanation that I had ever heard was from one of the professors who asked us to imagine explaining to Alien visitors what human means. We would point out other males and females. "What about those little ones?" And we would answer, "Humans, but not yet adults." In the end, there is no perfect explanation for the Holy Trinity.

Our basic understanding of God comes from our Jewish Scriptures and their attitude towards God, which is one of reverence, awe, silence, to name a few. It is basic to an understanding of our Trinitarian God when we know the basic understanding of God in the Hebrew Testament or Old Testament.

The Jews had two names for God which has a long history in Scriptures, ***Elohim***, which is the oldest and ***Yahweh***. The name "Yahweh" is never spoken by orthodox Jews. The Hebrew word for *Lord*, ***Adonai***, is used instead. In the written Hebrew, the vowels for the word Adonai, are placed over the consonants for Yahweh as an aid to remember. All Jews know this. Unfortunately, someone failed to tell the Jehovah Witnesses. Jehovah is a bogus word from mixing the consonants of "Yahweh" with the vowels of "Adonai!" The devout Jew prays the "Shema Israel" three times a day, which is a reminder, "Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is one."

The second Jewish word for God is: "***Elohim***" which is plural for "El," the top Canaanite god in their pantheon of gods and is usually translated as *God* in our bibles. The plural for "El," which is "Elohim," is really used as the "Royal Plural" which generally means "God and His heavenly council." The Queen of England uses the royal plural, "We," when officially speaking for Head of State. The Pope also uses the "Royal Plural" – "We" when officially speaking for the Church, especially in his encyclicals.

Even though the oldest name for God was "Elohim" and is still used, their understanding of God deepened with revelation to Moses of the name Yahweh, or literally, "I Am," from the ***Burning Bush*** passage in the book of

Exodus. We know this because the names given to their children slowly changed from ending in "-el" for Elohim, to "-yah" for Yahweh. Examples of names of both are Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Hosea, Isaiah, Daniel. Another good example that both kinds were still used is the name Micah, which means "God-Like," changed from Michael, which also means "God-Like." Imagine calling your kid "God-Like?" "God-Like" you better get home right now!" When my Mom said "God-Like" Francis, then I really knew I was in trouble!

The Yahwist Theologian was a great storyteller, full of imagery, God as man through the use of anthropomorphism, a profound theologian. In his understanding of God man lives on familiar terms with God and meets God in everyday life. Moses sees God face to face as a friend. It seems we have lost this sense of familiarity with God. As Christians Jesus replaces this familiarity with God, but sometimes we distance ourselves even from Jesus when we over emphasize his divinity.

The Elohist Theologian was less vivid and more concrete. God is different from man. The Elohist avoids anthropomorphism, describing God too much in human terms. The Elohist Theologian reveals God through dreams, has theophanies like Jacob's ladder, uses angels, interested in moral questions, no images can be made. In *Give Us This Day* reading for Friday morning from Exodus, Moses can only see God's backside from a cleft in a rock.

God's relationship in the Old Testament was personal but with the Chosen People, and we see this through the prophets, especially with Hosea, where Israel was even seen as "bride!" With Jesus God now seeks a personal relationship with us, as individuals, and this was even hinted at in the Old Testament. "No longer will a person's sins be held accountable to next generation, but each man for himself."

You can take it from here by asking yourself, how much you have embraced Jesus as Brother, Redeemer, Lord, God? There is no mystery of the Trinity when seen as a personal invitation to a relationship with the three persons of God. The mystery is the incomprehensible love of God for us through the incarnation of his Son, Jesus, inviting us to this holy relationship through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the Good News!