

You have probably seen reproductions of the famous icon of the Trinity. The three Persons are seated around a table in an attitude of harmony and peace; the very lines of the icon create a circle within which the unity of the Persons, the manner of their presence to one another, is visible.

At the focal point of the icon there is a cup between them on the table. It is a wonderful use of symbol and suggestion. The Trinity hints at the Eucharist. It is as if the divine Persons were saying to us: be one with one another as we are one. To make the invitation even clearer, there is an empty place at the table.

We are being invited and drawn into the inner life of the Trinity, to sit at that empty place at God's table. The Father is the destination, Jesus is the way, the Spirit is the inner urge to move that way. No one is forced, only drawn by love.

It is distinctive to the Christian to believe that God is One in three Persons. The first thing our parents taught us about our religion probably was the Sign of the Cross. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The last thing a priest will do at our graveside is make the Sign of the Cross over our remains, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Between those two moments, a Christian's life is lived with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

A person might wonder what the Trinity has to do with his or her life. The doctrine is both profound and very personal.

It is, first of all, profound. There is only one God. Yet, this God is three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three are distinct. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Each of these Persons is really and truly God, but still, there is only one God.

God gave us a glimpse into His own inner life as a powerful circle of love. The Father gives the Son all He has and the Son is the perfect image of the Father. Between them there is a love so powerful that It is called the Holy Spirit.

But it is also very personable. Scripture tells of a Father who created children in His own image and likeness. He breathed into them the very breath of life. He wanted the best for us. But we rebelled and went our own way.

Any parent could understand this – perhaps one of their children has been lost to drugs or left the faith. A loving parent will do everything in their power to getting them back home.

Scripture tells of a Father Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to that world that whoever believes in the Son might have eternal life. God didn't love us in words alone. Giving Jesus to the world was an act of radical, unthinkable love to bring us back to the family.

How unthinkable was it? Call to mind the person you love most in the world: maybe your parent, your child, your spouse, a friend, a brother or sister.

Now call to mind the person toward whom you have the most difficult feelings. Maybe it's someone you work with, or a neighbor. Being around this person is like chewing sand, because they've done some pretty bad things or hurt you in some way.

Suppose this person is in terrible need, let's say in the hospital in critical condition needing a kidney transplant in order to survive. Would you be willing to help that person in costly ways?

Would you ask the person you love most in the world to donate his or her kidney? Would you ask the person you love most to do this if you knew that the surgery would result in unthinkable suffering and loss?

Would you sacrifice the person you love most to die so that the person you dislike most could live?

Imagine saying goodbye to the person you love most and seeing him or her wheeled through the hospital door, and then seeing the other come out that same door sometime later.

Would you do that? Would you allow such suffering of your son or daughter to save that person? I would say, no, I could not do that. But God the Father did so with his Son.

So yes, the love for us in the inner life of the Trinity is very personable and profound. And because of Christ, we are now included in the family of the of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*Introduction of the seminarian, who will speak...*