

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Cycle B
Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40
Psalm 33:4-5, 6, 9, 19-19, 20, 22
Romans 8:14-17
Matthew 28:16-20
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For centuries now, life in the Western world has been becoming increasingly individualistic. Some scholars trace the beginning of this process back more than 400 years to the dawn of market capitalism in Europe. Up until that time, for better or worse, a person's position in the world was determined by his or her place in a comparatively rigid social structure. You inherited your status from your parents. Your meaning, purpose and function in life, and the rights and privileges you enjoyed, were bestowed upon you by society at the time of your birth. With the onset of capitalism, this began to change. Wealth and status began to be determined by success in the marketplace. It became increasingly likely that the richest person in town was not an hereditary aristocrat, but a business savvy peasant. Now a person was to a great extent responsible for determining his or her own place in the world. The individual, not society or tradition, became the locus of meaning. You were who you determined yourself to be. Some have suggested that this new state of affairs prepared the ground for the Protestant Reformation. For the reformers, salvation had lost much of the communal dimension it enjoyed in Catholicism. Now salvation depended on a momentous, lonely encounter between the individual and God.

The process of individualization carried on through the centuries of secularization of the Western world, and has continued to the point that people today understand themselves to be engaged in an individual struggle to invest their own lives with meaning, and to project that meaning on the world. In the modern phrase, “Everyone is their own brand.” Traditional group allegiances tend to be referred to ironically, if at all.

Of course, this is all delusion. Radical individualism doesn’t really reflect reality. The point is sometimes made by asking, “What’s the one thing you can know for sure if you see a turtle sitting on top of a fence post?” The answer? The turtle didn’t get there by itself. And with a moment’s reflection we realize that it’s the same with us. Countless people have been responsible for putting us where we are today.

The Feast we are celebrating, The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, is for Christians the ultimate refutation of radical individualism. For us, God – the one who said “I am” from the burning bush, *is* ‘being.’ So, if we want to reflect on reality – if we want to base our lives and make our choices in light of the truth of things, we turn to God. When we do, we discover that even the one, eternal, self-sufficient God does not live in solitary individualism. Rather, God is a *relationship* of perfect love among three persons, Father, Son & Holy Spirit. The ultimate bottom line, then, is not isolation, but interrelation. And remember, we are made in God’s image! In a profound sense we *are* in loving relationship with God and our neighbor, and can afford to affirm that our lives are centered not in ourselves but in those others.