

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

LECTIONARY #164

READING I Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

A reading from the Book of Exodus

Early in the morning Moses went up Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him, taking along the two stone tablets.

Having come down in a cloud, the LORD stood with Moses there and proclaimed his name, "LORD."

Thus the Lord passed before him and cried out, "The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity."

Moses at once bowed down to the ground in worship.

Then he said, "If I find favor with you, O LORD, do come along in our company.

This is indeed a stiff-necked people; yet pardon our wickedness and sins, and receive us as your own."

Exodus = EK-suh-duhs

Moses = MOH-zihz or MOH-zihz

Sinai = Si-ni

Slight pause between "morning" and "Moses."

God is speaking this exhortation to Moses.

"Stiff-necked people": Moses is speaking for all of us in our stubbornness when he uses these words.

READING I Our first reading is part of the story about God restoring the tablets of the Law that Moses broke when he came down the mountain and saw the Israelites engaged in worshiping a golden calf (Exodus 32:19). The Book of Exodus describes Moses as having an intimate relationship with God, and the narrator of Exodus 33:11 tells us "the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a person speaks to a friend." At one point, Moses asks to see God's glory, and God consents, saying, "I will proclaim my name, 'LORD,' before you. . . . But you cannot see my

face, for no one can see me and live" (Exodus 33:19-20).

This is where today's reading begins. God tells Moses to prepare to return to the top of the mountain with two new stone tablets so that God can remake the tablets of the covenant with the Israelites. God comes down to the mountain to meet Moses and "proclaimed his name, 'LORD.'" What is the significance of this action? If we look at the description of God's covenant with Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 20, we will find an important clue. There too God proclaims his name, that is, identifies

himself, as the one making the covenant. God does so by saying, "For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:5-6).

However, in this story of the restoration of the tablets of the Law, God proclaims his name differently. Here, God says, "The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kind-

For meditation and context:

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

This reading comes from the conclusion of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, the so-called valediction. Its tone is encouraging and uplifting, meant to convey Paul's conclusive feelings of hope.

ness and fidelity." Immediately Moses bowed his head—the Hebrew word suggests worship or submission—and asks God to be with them. All that remains is for God to deliver the Law, the Israelites' obligation to the covenant.

READING II Today's second reading is the conclusion of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. Paul's exhortations to good behavior are general in nature—like what a parent might say to an adolescent child before leaving them

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55 (52b)

R. Glory and praise for ever!

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God
of our fathers,
praiseworthy and exalted above all
forever;
and blessed is your holy and glorious name,
praiseworthy and exalted above all for
all ages.

Blessed are you in the temple of your
holy glory,
praiseworthy and glorious above
all forever.

Blessed are you on the throne
of your kingdom,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

Blessed are you who look into the depths
from your throne upon the cherubim,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

READING II 2 Corinthians 13:11–13

A reading from second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters, rejoice.

**Mend your ways, encourage one another,
agree with one another, live in peace,
and the God of love and peace will be with you.**

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the holy ones greet you.

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God**

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

alone—but Paul's big concern is peace within the community. If we could reconstruct the life of this Christian community at Corinth based on Paul's two letters, we would be amazed at this colorful and unruly group of Christians. Their story would make a great soap opera! But the reason that this reading is noteworthy, especially today on the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, is the final sentence. It is the clearest and most illuminating acclamation of the trinitarian God in the entire New Testament.

GOSPEL John's Gospel provides us with an equally beautiful and profound statement about Jesus, his relationship with the Father, and his role in the salvation of the world. The verbs in the phrases "he gave his only Son" and "God did not send his Son" have related meanings. Likewise, the verbs "to perish" and "to condemn" have related meanings, as do "to have eternal life" and "to be saved." But there is even more going on here. There are several Greek words for love, including sexual attraction, friendship love, and uncondi-

GOSPEL John 3:16–18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

God so loved the **world** that he gave his **only Son**,
so that **everyone** who **believes** in him might not **perish**
but might **have eternal life**.

For **God** did not send his **Son** into the **world** to **condemn**
the world,

but that the **world** might be **saved through** him.

Whoever **believes** in him will **not** be **condemned**,
but whoever **does not believe** has **already** been **condemned**,
because he has **not believed** in the **name** of the **only Son**
of **God**.

A brief reading with a very familiar message. Try not to proclaim the opening as a slogan. Instead, proclaim as if it is being said for the first time.

Slight pause between "saved" and "through."

Note the repetition and the inversion: "believes" and "not condemned"; "does not believe" and "already condemned."

tional love without expectation for return. The Greek word for this third kind of love is *agapaó*. Although the author of John's Gospel is not entirely consistent regarding the use of these synonyms for love, clearly, in this instance, John has in mind unconditional love. Also, the author of this Gospel has what we call a "realized eschatology," meaning that he understands himself and his community to be already in the throes of the end time.

Why would early Christians think this way? Among first-century Jewish views

about what happens after death, there was a segment of the population who believed that resurrection of the dead was a sign of the end time. Therefore, when people began to proclaim Jesus Christ raised from the dead, these same people thought that the end time was already underway. This is why there is no "in between" in the talk about salvation and condemnation. Either you are already committed to God and his Son Jesus, or you are already condemned. Today, most Christians who anticipate an end time return of Christ have a future

eschatology, which significantly defers people's anxiety about the end time. Regardless, the point of this reading for today's believers is that God is so generous and unconditional with divine love that he is willing to give his only Son to effect salvation for the whole world. How else can we respond but in gratitude? C.C.