

One of the things that I have seen time and time again in life is the power of God's love shining through people in all that they do. I've been raised by two selfless parents who worked tirelessly to turn our house into a home, and gave so much to me growing up and to our extended family. I've seen so many people in the parish who give without asking anything in return. And I've been blessed to work with wonderful staff who do not do what they do for a paycheck as their primary motivation, but because they want to make a difference and help people on their journey to God.

And really, that is what Trinity Sunday is about - emulating the Trinity by listening to what God has called us to do, discerning the message, and then doing it. For because people do this, so much good comes into the world as people emulate the love of the Father, Son and Spirit - a love so strong, that it flows out to all of us.

Take missionary work, which is not done by just missionaries in religious orders, but by people from all walks of life, such as our youth who go on a trip each summer, to our Haiti group. People hear God's call and then live it out.

As I prepared for the homily this week, I ran across of all things the web site for the archdiocese of Singapore. On it, they have a section where people can share their stories of how they live out their faith. And among them was the story of Adrian Tee and his family.

Some years ago, Adrian visited a Catholic mission in Kenya with his wife Jennifer. They promised to return with their three daughters. But life got in the way. The couple were busy running their media production company, while school and other activities soaked up their girls' time. There were also financial constraints, and this led to postponing a trip. But their three girls – Leah, 17, Christiane, 15, and Trina, 13 – were disappointed but understanding. Then God intervened.

Jennifer recalls how Christiane announced one day that she would skip a school trip to Japan scheduled for June, as she was convinced the family would be traveling to Kenya then.

Stunned by her faith, her parents began praying in earnest, trusting in the Lord to fulfill their wish. A few days later, they received an e-mail promotion that would enable them to fly to Kenya using the air miles chalked up on their credit cards. Soon after, they won a few thousand dollars in a lottery.

Coincidence? Perhaps. But Jennifer said "We took these as a clear sign from God that He was making this trip possible for us."

In early June, the family headed to Turkana, Kenya's second largest county and also one of its hottest and poorest regions. About 100 times the size of Singapore, Turkana grapples with perennial drought, which leaves its population of nearly 1 million on the constant brink of starvation.

Here, they joined up with the Missionary Community of St Paul the Apostle (MCSPA), the group Adrian and Jennifer stayed with in 2010. MCSPA is made up of priests and lay volunteers who devote their lives to helping marginalized communities in remote places. They preach the love of God through their actions: digging dams, building schools, providing health-care and training the locals in desert agriculture. They had guest rooms to stay in. But, it certainly wasn't easy. While pleasantly surprised that they did not have to stay in straw huts or use squat toilets, the three teenagers found themselves pushed to their limits at the start of their three-week stay. The blistering heat in the parched scrubland proved almost unbearable.

Said Leah: "I remember the first two nights being the toughest to get through as it was so hot and stuffy. I actually broke down on the second night because I missed home so much."

Meanwhile, her sisters battled fears of the myriad insects and creepy crawlies that plagued them day and night.

Christiane recalls being "on the verge of screaming most of the time" as they constantly dodged and swatted away flies, moths, wasps, mosquitoes and spiders.

After a week, however, they found ways to cope.

"I just pretended that the moths were butterflies," says Trina. "I also decided not to pay attention to the insects but to other more important things."

The family soon settled into a routine. They usually started the day with a dip in a nearby dam or Lake Turkana, and went to bed at night after watching a movie under the stars with the MCSPA folks. The outdoor movie screening is the only form of entertainment at the mission, where WiFi coverage tends to be spotty and limited.

In between, the Tees would visit the schools, dispensaries, nutritional units and garden plots set up by MCSPA and observe the missionaries at work. Along the way, each also contributed in his or her own way.

Jennifer often helped out in the kitchen, whipping up dishes using the condiments she had bought in Singapore.

The girls took on assorted chores and tasks with good cheer, from scrubbing the floors and weeding the gardens to distributing medicines and doing data entry work for MCSPA's healthcare program. They also entertained the locals and missionaries with musical performances. Christiane would play the violin while Leah accompanied her on an electronic keyboard, which they lugged from Singapore and donated to MCSPA before they left.

Adrian was the trusty IT guy who helped to patch and expand Nariokotome's (the small village they were in) wireless network. This was, in fact, his third trip to the mission

base. He had visited MCSPA's various missions in Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi and South Sudan in 2014 with three colleagues." He and his family found it rewarding because they also got so much in return. In his words: "We were the ones who were evangelized because we overcame our own misconceptions and prejudices, seeing how the people who have so little can remain so joyful and welcoming.

The family has long been involved in various Catholic groups and ministries. Adrian and Jennifer serve as a couple in the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Singapore movement, while the girls are members of the choir and youth symphony at Church of the Risen Christ.

But the trip in June was extra special. With virtually no Internet connection, the family spent more time chatting about their experiences and praying together each day. Said Adrian: "We became much closer. The heat, discomfort and basic amenities also compelled us to step up to help one another, and we took turns to do the laundry, dishes and cleaning. Encountering God and the work of His Church as a family was a unique experience for us."

The girls, too, look back on their time in Turkana with much fondness. While they wanted to cut short the trip initially, they began to dread leaving as their departure date drew near.

Asked to name one lesson they drew from the trip, all three give variations of the same answer: learning to count their blessings.

It is this transformation that their parents are most proud of.

Jennifer, who had hoped that her "city girls" would see beyond the harsh living conditions, is pleased that they bore the physical discomfort without complaint and strove to make themselves useful. She says she is so very proud that they overcame many of their fears and made the best out of the trip. The best thing is, they expressed the desire to do more if they could turn back time.

The missionaries' compassion and selflessness have inspired the girls to be of service to others. While few can leave everything behind to become missionaries, they believe everyone can do God's work through simple good deeds, such as helping a friend with her schoolwork or providing a listening ear.

Citing one of Mother Teresa's mottos, "Do small things with great love", Christiane says, "By doing these small acts of kindness, we, too, can do our part to help others in need."

Their story is one shared by countless Christians, and I guarantee we opened up the pulpit to people who have gone on mission trips from our parish they'd probably share the same thing. And really it's an illustration not just of love and service, but about the core meaning of the Trinity.

How does one describe the Trinity? While not explicitly talked about in the Bible, we have come to understand that the Trinity is how the Father, Son and Spirit relate, all being united as equal, yet distinct at the same time. The history of our understanding goes back to Nicea when one priest, named Arius, said Jesus was kind of like Hercules - a Demigod. Against this a number of bishops were saying Arius downplayed Jesus' divinity too much, and that if He was not God, then He would also need to be saved. Finally Constantine calls the Nicean council, a suburb of Constantinople, and after debate they determine through the guidance of the Spirit that what becomes incarnate in Christ is eternally begotten of the Father. It does not come forth like a creature, who is made from nothing; the Son is begotten, not made, which is what we say each week - God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made. The Father and Son are distinct, but from the same substance or essence. The Holy Spirit is the outpouring of the love between Father and Son, which is why we say "descends from the Father and the Son."

How then do we think about it and put that theology into practice? The best answer is love. Namely, we see how God speaks, what is spoken, and then understand the words. As we do this, we become wrapped up in the Trinity itself. This is why we start virtually all prayers with the Sign of the Cross - we want to draw closer to God and surrender to Him so we can dwell in Him and have Him dwell in us. So what then does that look like in action?

Well this is why the story of that family from Singapore struck me.

First, we see the Father speaking if you will time and time again. That first reading says it so well, as Moses speaks to the people about to enter the promised land. Look he says, have you ever seen this, where a people heard the voice of God speaking from fire, taking a people onto himself? And we see it throughout the Old Testament. The Father speaks time and time again in Creation, the prophets; the acts of liberation; the giving of the Torah. God the Father is this great force who acts time and time again, but all of these acts are signs of how the created are loved by God.

With the Son, this love of the Father comes to it's climax. Jesus shows God's ultimate love for us in laying down His life for us all. As He says, you have something greater than the Temple here - destroy this Temple (referring to His body) and in three days I will rebuild it. Jesus is the definitive way God draws the whole world to Himself. We have strayed and were lost and were fallen, but in the dying and rising of Jesus whom the Father sends, sin and death are conquered. As Paul says: "you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a Spirit of adoption, through whom we cry, Abba, Father!"

So if the Father speaks time and time again, and Jesus is the perfect form of what is spoken, the Holy Spirit helps us to discern how to live out the words and mission we are given from Jesus. Our Gospel is pretty familiar from the Ascension. Jesus says "go...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them..." The Holy Spirit helped us as a Church to

understand the Trinity. The Holy Spirit helped Adrian's family discern giving of a month of their time to help the needy in Africa. The Holy Spirit empowers us to do our vocation, to serve God and one another, and to build up the Church. Through the power of the Spirit, not only do we help others, but as Adrian's story illustrates, we are made stronger and better too when we follow the promptings of the Spirit.

So what to conclude about the Trinity? It all comes down to one word: love. As Christiane said in quoting Mother Teresa, do small things with great love. And that's the essence of living the Triune life. From being patient with people, to being there for your family, to making a mission trip, whatever it may be, our call is to make sure the Trinity is not referred to as a mechanical way to start Mass or prayer, but rather a reminder and a call to action each time we say "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." A reminder that God has spoken and we are do deeply loved. But a call to action to bring that love into the world. In life it can be so easy to slip into being a part-time Christian, to get preoccupied with money, being a busybody, and put so much energy into the things that pass away. Because of the Father, Son and Spirit though, we aren't meant to be caught up in the things of this world, rather we are called to be caught up in life of God and then to be an icon in this world of who God is. Adrian, Jennifer and their family did just that, seeing God in the people they served but being brought closer to God too because of how those people also ministered to them. May we too be an icon of the divine in this world, teaching people what the Trinity through our acts of love.