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In the article written by Lewis Ayres entitled “*The Trinity and the Life of the Christian: A Liturgical Catechism*”, the author stressed three main points which he presented through different styles or patterns to help the catechists and religious teach the doctrine of the Trinity to Christian believers. But, before proceeding to the main points of Ayres’ article, I would like to give attention to how he described the experiences of many Christians when it comes to learning or teaching about the Trinity basically because as a catechist I admit that I also had a hard time explaining this doctrine of the Trinity to my students. He mentioned that many who have been called to the ministry of preaching God’s Word have these “feelings of dread, mystification and discomfort”[[1]](#footnote-1) which agrees to the way how Christians see the doctrine about the Trinity. Many Christ believers see the doctrine about the Trinity as something irrelevant and incomprehensible which actually is even the same in the Philippine context where in “the Trinity is usually taught as a “mystery” which we cannot understand. It therefore has little practical importance, even in the prayer life of the ordinary Filipino Catholic.”[[2]](#footnote-2) And so, many are still confused and are having a hard time understanding this doctrine about the Trinity. But, Ayres is reminding his readers especially the teachers of the faith and the religious that the answers to the many possible questions about the Trinity are present in the liturgy particularly in the *novus ordo* of the Roman Rite which we are all familiar with basically because the doctrine about the Trinity is being said and heard during the celebration of the Holy Mass. With this, Ayres explained three patterns of speech about the Father, Son and Spirit that are to be heard from the liturgy.

The **first style or pattern of speech** speaks of the “Father, Son and Spirit as possessing equal glory and, hence, to worship them equally.”[[3]](#footnote-3) This pattern of speech about the Trinity is very evident in the Gloria part of the Holy Mass which falls into **three sections.** The **first section** is a prayer to the Father, to the Almighty God where we attribute all glory and praise. In this first section of the Gloria we are reminded that God alone possesses glory where in to truly possess glory is “to be the one true glory, it is to be God.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The **second section** of the prayer speaks of the Jesus who is the only Son of the Father addressed here as *Dominus Deus* or “Lord God.” The Son’s role is stated very clearly. He is the one who “takes away the sins of the world and who is seated at the right hand of the Father, but he is also one who is like the Father who is ‘Lord God’”[[5]](#footnote-5) And the **third section** of Gloria according to Hilary of Poitiers as quoted by Ayres, reminds us that “the Father is alone true God, but God in such a way that all that the Father is, is also eternally shared with Son and Spirit.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This sharing results to unity between the three in life and work. “There remains one God even as there is this eternal sharing.”[[7]](#footnote-7) There might be distinction in the role of the Father, Son and Spirit but they are still united and one in nature.

The pattern present in Gloria is echoed in many other parts of the Holy Mass particularly during the prayer after the elevation of the host, “Through him, with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours Almighty Father forever and ever.”[[8]](#footnote-8) This then, tells us that the Father’s glory will always be through/with/in Jesus and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the glory that the Father has is not only partially shared with the Son, but the Son receives that same glory as the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Jesus affirmed this when he said, “the Father and I are one” *(Jn 10:30)* These words of Jesus does not literally mean that he is identical with the Father, but rather that “he is perfectly united with the Father.”[[9]](#footnote-9) In Hilary’s theology lay behind the final form of Gloria where in everyone is called to worship God. Therefore, the Gloria which most of the Catholics are familiar with sets an initial lesson about teaching and learning the Trinity. But as Catechists, we have to emphasize here that learning about the Trinity is not only about having a theological knowledge of who God is but rather, the knowledge we have must lead us and our students to worship God and have a deepened appreciation of the liturgy especially of the Holy Mass. That is why Ayres as he continued, reminds the catechists and religious that before worrying so much about how we can teach the Trinity, we focus first to teaching and learning appropriate attitudes of prayer and attention. Prayer is very important here because of the “relationship between us and God it nurtures.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Through prayer we learn God is always with us, He is in our midst and is closer to us than we are to ourselves. If “held with faith and trust”[[11]](#footnote-11) prayer may lead us to a deeper understanding of who God is and will bring us awareness on how He is actively working in our life through Jesus in the Spirit. Recognizing God’s active work in and with us will move us to living life into the light of faith and will strengthen us as we strive to live faithfully as true disciples of Christ.

**The second pattern of speech** is from the Eucharistic prayers where in the author emphasized that “the Father, through the Word or Son and in the Spirit create and gives life to all. It tells us that through the same Son and in the same Spirit the Father redeems. The Father redeems by drawing us into the Son as the members of His body and as his sons and daughters, and it tells us that we are drawn into the Son by means of the Spirit’s life- giving work in us.”[[12]](#footnote-12) This basically affirms the statement of CFC that says, “all three Divine Persons act together as ONE GOD in creating, redeeming and sanctifying.”[[13]](#footnote-13) However, though the role of the Father is Creator, the Son is Redeemer and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, all three Divine Persons are not working individually in doing these roles that made them distinct from each other. But rather, they are always one in doing this salvific work for the redemption of us all to draw us back in union with God. With this, we can learn more on how “our lives as Christians are enveloped by the Trinitarian life of God.”[[14]](#footnote-14) As Christians, “we were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit.”[[15]](#footnote-15) It is in baptism that we become adopted sons and daughters of God and as we receive the sacrament of Baptism we are called to share in the His divine life which means to think, speak and act like Jesus, who in the Spirit, fully revealed to the Father to us. Even in our prayer and in the liturgy, we always start with the sign of the Cross as we say, “in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Indeed, “our Christian life is marked by the Trinity.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

The author also gives emphasis to the work of the Trinity in creation telling us how God through His Word gives the Breath of life to all His creation. “When God speaks from eternity his Word is a word that lives.”[[17]](#footnote-17) And so whatever God wishes for His creation, it is being reflected though His Word and is being sustained by the Holy Spirit to help God’s creation grow and develop. God who redeemed us, is also the source of everything keeping us and the other creation in existence. This then tells us not only of the work of the Trinity in creation but also, this reminds us that God’s Word is indeed a living Word. From the reading article “Sacred Scripture: Soul of Theology” it says that “His speech is not simply a voice of the past but is living and active and speaks to each generation living in the present and until the end of time. [[18]](#footnote-18) If we follow and faithfully obeyed God’s Word and His teachings, it will affect our lives and will make us better person living according to what God desires transforming us to live life deeply rooted into the teachings of Christ.

As Ayres continued, he highlighted the work of the Spirit as the one that animates us- keeping us in existence and helps us develop and grow in our relationships and brings us together in unity and in the liturgy. It is through with and in Christ, because we have unity in the Spirit, we are able to render glory to the Father. He emphasize that the Spirit is “a living and personal reality who loves, who is the active loving found in Father and the Son.”[[19]](#footnote-19) This indeed shows the Holy Trinity as a communion of love in which the Father is the lover, the Son is the beloved and the Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. This active work of the Holy Spirit then draws us into Christ and in Christ we approach the Father.

**The third pattern** speaks of how the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct yet one in naturewhich we can see in the Nicene Creed. As Ayres discuss this third pattern, he had stated a Trinitarian doctrine which is short and formulaic but can’t be fully comprehend by someone who is not theologically literate. And so, he reminds the catechists that we are to teach the Truths of our faith particularly about the Holy Trinity, in a way that it can be understood by the people we catechized. Understanding of the Trinity must lead people to worship God through the liturgy. With this, Ayres reiterate that saying of the Nicene Creed in the liturgy must be an act of worship that can eventually transform us into understanding the mystery of the Trinity rather than a mere intellectual explanation of the doctrine. He also emphasized the Trinity Sunday as an opportunity to talk about the Trinity but in a way that the priest/preacher would not think of himself purely as a teacher or as a theologian, but as a fellow Christian before the ineffable mystery. In referring to Trinity as a mystery, it does not mean that we cannot understand it but rather, this means that through the help and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, there are still something more we can understand about.

Ayres said that “to preach on the Trinity well is both to instruct, to draw attention to patterns of language established for us by the Scripture and tradition and modelled in our liturgical texts, and it is also to model our search for understanding in the face of the divine mystery.” Here, the author is suggesting that in teaching about the Trinity, we focus on the liturgy and sacred scriptures. As a professional catechist, I can actually agree with this claim of Ayres. However, in the Philippine context where most of the people practice popular piety for the reason that they cannot easily understand and relate from the highly theological text in the official liturgy, I guess there is a need first for an inculturated liturgy where people’s culture and identity is being considered. It is only then that I can fully agree with his claim. Furthermore, he reminds all of us, especially the Catechists that we are not to present the Trinity to our students using threefold analogy (ex. 3 in 1 coffee or mango) because at the end it does not really give them a deeper understanding of who God is and how God works in the lives of people. For me now, I guess the most helpful way for me to explain to my students the Holy Trinity is as communion of love in which the Father is the lover, the Son is the beloved and the Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. This does not mean that I am disregarding the ideas presented by the author because I can say that what Ayres shared helped me deepen my understanding about the Mystery of the Trinity. Surely, it will help me develop my future lesson about the Holy Trinity having in mind that their understanding of this doctrine may lead my students to worship God.

At the end, the author is reminding us to embrace whatever feeling of discomfort we feel in this ministry of teaching or preaching God’s Word. He is telling us that giving up is not an option because we are not alone in this mission for God who is actively working in our lives is always with us and in us through Christ in the Spirit.

Grade 1 Good job.

1. Lewis Ayres, “The Trinity and the Life of the Christians: A Liturgical Catechism,” *New Blackfriars*(2010): 4.  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education (ECCCE), *National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines*  l.(Manila,2007). Hereafter referred to as *CFC* with paragraph number. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ayres, “The Trinity and the Life of the Christians: A Liturgical Catechism,” p.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ayres, “The Trinity and the Life of the Christians: A Liturgical Catechism.” p.6 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. CFC 1329. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ayres. “The Trinity and the Life of the Christians: A Liturgical Catechism.” p.7 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. CFC 318 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ayres. “The Trinity and the Life of the Christians: A Liturgical Catechism.” p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. CFC 268 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ayres. “The Trinity and the Life of the Christians: A Liturgical Catechism.” p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ma. Lucia C. Natividad. “Sacred Scripture: Soul of Theology.” p.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ayres. “The Trinity and the Life of the Christians: A Liturgical Catechism.” p.10 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)