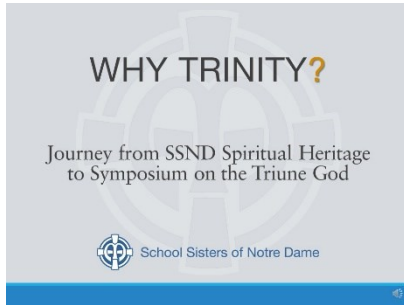


WHY TRINITY?

Script by Kathleen Cornell, SSND

View the video at <https://youtu.be/Bx92ZNhhzGc>



Welcome, Sisters and Associates, to this presentation on Why Trinity? A journey from SSND Spiritual Heritage to the Symposium on the Triune God.

During this presentation, we offer an explanation of how and why the congregation is called to a deeper understanding of the Trinity as stated in the Directional Statement, *Love Gives Everything*.

The purpose of this presentation is threefold:

- Recognize that faith in the Trinity is our Christian heritage and that *You Are Sent* is grounded in Trinitarian theology. Trinity is in our bones, our DNA.
- Recognize the connection between and among the mission of Jesus, the life of the Trinity, and our call to mission.
- Understand how the General Chapter delegates came to articulate the call to deepen our consciousness.

The Directional Statement, *Love Gives Everything*, calls us ... “to deepen our consciousness of who we are in relationship with the Triune God, one another, and God’s amazing universe, particularly through theological reflection on the Trinity.”

It is a privilege to share with you how we as SSNDs arrived at this commitment.

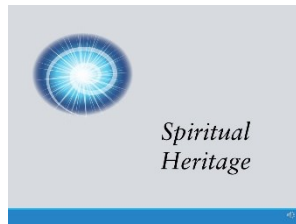
There has definitely been a movement over time. A movement in which we have journeyed towards a desire for a deeper understanding and commitment to the Triune God in our lives.

- First, we will focus on a brief consideration of our spiritual heritage – what do Saint Augustine and Blessed Theresa offer us?
- Then we will examine *You Are Sent* and identify what areas in our Constitution the Triune God is included.
- Next, we will look at the vision in our directional statements from 1987 to the current Directional Statement of 2017. We will examine them in light of movement towards naming and understanding Trinity.
- Lastly, we will share how the delegates came to articulate the Directional Statement from the 24th General Chapter.

Before we move on... look at the words in the commitment...

“We deepen our consciousness of who we are in relationship with the Triune God, one another, and God’s amazing universe, particularly through theological reflection on the Trinity.”
What resonates with you? What draws you? What challenges you?

Keep that in mind as you listen to our story of movement; our story that reflects the evolving of our charism.



First, our spiritual heritage...

Timing – 3:40

We trace our roots to St. Augustine who lived in the 4th century. He wrote 15 volumes on the Trinity which are still studied. At one point in history, he was called the ‘Doctor of the Holy Trinity’.

We honor him and his study in the prologue to our Constitution:

“Our charism flows from our spiritual heritage, especially the gifts of St. Augustine, who formed a community to be of one heart and one soul in God, **seeing in the Trinity the basis, source and goal of all community.**”

For Augustine, the Trinity was an example of how to be about relationships, oneness of being, connectedness. Insights we are beginning to understand more deeply in our study of cosmology and of Laudato Si, the encyclical letter from Pope Francis.

Pope Francis states that “The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures..... Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity” (Laudato Si, 240).

In a series of meditations and prayers in 1823 and 1824 as published in a book entitled “On Spiritual Matters,” Theresa prayed the following to the Trinity:

“But I cannot love you if I do not live in accordance with your will, if my life does not reflect you. O Father, have mercy on me, through your Son, Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

On Spiritual Matters, page 22

On Trinity Sunday, May 30, 1847, a few weeks before she was to travel to America, Blessed Theresa wrote a long letter to her Sisters.

She begins with an explanation about her travels to the United States and then calls her sisters to “love God above all things and our companion sisters and neighbors as ourselves. The Holy Spirit has brought us together and Jesus Christ, our Divine Bridegroom, has knotted the close bonds among us and has accepted us into his service.”

#714, Volume 6, Mission to America, p. 18

She then instructs them on living the vows, praying, being educators and practicing penance. She calls it presenting, and I quote, “...in a very succinct manner something of the spirit of our order.”

Towards the end, Theresa writes: “Dear Sisters, let us begin again to serve the Triune God all our lives with joy, to obey God, to love God above all, as we will do eternally in our heavenly homeland.” In closing she prays for our sisters in these familiar words:

#714, pp. 36 and 39

“I solemnly commend all the sisters to the most Holy Trinity. May God the Father care for you all and keep you steadfast and faithful in your holy vocation! May God the Son deliver you from all evil of sin and be the way you walk, the truth you follow, and the life you lead! May the Holy Spirit preserve you in love and grace”

#714 pp. 41-42

In June of 1859, in a letter to her Sisters announcing that the Holy Rule had been approved by the Holy See, Theresa ended with the words: *Praise, honor, and thanks to the Triune God and to Mary, the most holy Mother of our Order!*”

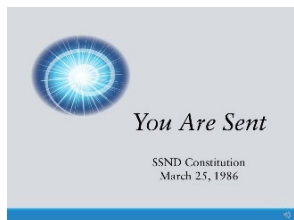
#2912, Volume 5, Living Branches 1859-1867, p. 17

One last example from Blessed Theresa – In March of 1878 she wrote a farewell letter to the Sisters before her death.

“I wish to extend a special motherly greeting to the sisters in other countries who are personally unknown to me and to thank you for the prayers you have said for me... How much happier our reunion will be in eternity where separation will be no more, and we will rejoice together in eternity thanking and praising the Triune God!”

#5319, Volume 15, Abundant Fruit, p. 202

Let us give thanks for the lives of Saint Augustine and Blessed Theresa of Jesus.



Our spiritual heritage is strong and it influenced our renewal after Vatican II. From 1968 to 1982, we met, shared and discerned our way of life and developed a new constitution, *You Are Sent*.

On March 25, 1986 the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes approved *You Are Sent*.

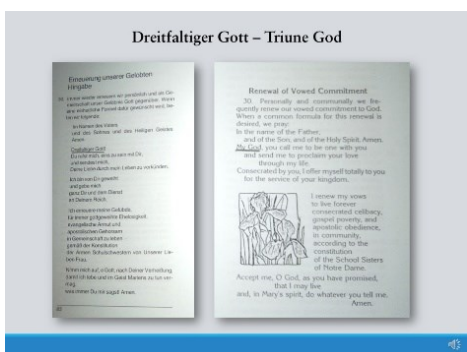
The prologue begins with naming the first of four essentials:
“Jesus Christ, who sent by the Father, sends us in the power of the Spirit, to proclaim the gospel by our lives.” Later, the prologue proclaims: “Our charism flows from our spiritual heritage” and names “St. Augustine who formed a community to be of **one heart and one soul in God, seeing in the Trinity the basis, source and goal of all community.**”

The beginning of our Constitution (C1) quotes John’s Gospel as it proclaims our mission: “The words of Christ ring clear....
May they be one in us... so that the world may believe it was you who sent me (John 17: 21).

Throughout *You Are Sent*, this message of living the gospel and being a community of one heart and one soul is clear. In part 1 of the Constitution, paragraphs 1 to 49, the Trinity is included in the sections on Vows, Prayer, Eucharist and in the Conclusion.

Listen to these readings carefully and note the call, the mystery that we are still trying to grasp. Let the Holy Spirit open your mind and heart.

Vows -- Consecrated by the Triune God for mission, we live in such a way that the kingdom becomes more clearly visible in our redeemed yet sinful world.
Prophetically we proclaim the primacy of God’s reign, present yet still to come. C 12



It is interesting to note that in English - as seen on the right - the beginning of the vow commitment begins with the words My God and in German which is seen on the left - the German words are translated as Triune God

Prayer -- The source and center of our personal, communal, and apostolic life is our union with God. We come to the Father through Christ in the power of the Spirit.
From Jesus we learn what it means to be in union with and sent by the Father (C 27).

Eucharist -- We are called to be one and to bring all to oneness with God. The Eucharist is the principal source and expression of the love and unity we strive for in our community and in our world. In Eucharist, we are caught up in the love relationship of Christ with the Father in the Holy Spirit (C 33).

Note the words “caught up in the love relationship of Christ with the Father in the Holy Spirit. “

Notice how Trinity is essential to our understanding and experience of Eucharist. Eucharist is a Trinitarian Event.

As you listen to the Conclusion of *You are Sent*, Part 1 -- note that it begins with the words “as Community” AND closes with Theresa’s words to serve the Triune God.

As community we are sent in the power of the Spirit to continue Christ’s mission, to proclaim him, to be transformed and to transform our world, bringing all to that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. We go forth daily in the spirit of Mother Theresa, remembering her words: “Let us continue to serve the Triune God all our lives with joy, to obey him, to love him above all.” (#714 p. 39, C48-49).



Timing – 15:46

After each General Chapter from 1987 to 2017, we have written a Directional Statement to call us more deeply to living our lives and proclaiming our mission at that time in history.

Each Directional Statement has furthered our understanding of *You Are Sent*.

- It is a life-long process of living God’s mission as an SSND in the church.
- Each Directional Statement was written from the context of the world situation.
- Each focuses on poverty, unjust structures and our ministry of education.
- Each calls us in some way to personal and communal conversion.

The first three Directional Statements, 1987, 1992 and 1997 all affirmed what we named as the *Mandate for Action*: Make the concerns of the poor our own.

We were called to “face the reality of poverty in our world and to allow God to touch us deeply through it” (1987).

Though words of Trinity are not present in these Directional Statements, the focus was and still is on contemplating Jesus who was sent to bring good news to the poor and so we committed to live simply, share our resources, be responsible for changing unjust structures, and permeate our education with a vision of possibilities (1992).

The 1997 Directional Statement begins with these words “...impelled by the spirit of Jesus Christ we struggle in solidarity with those who are poor, for justice and a global community.”

Besides affirming the *Mandate*, the delegates noted a need to understand why and how to respond to this call: a call to go deeper and to struggle with solidarity. Thus, in the Directional Statement we were called to “design and implement plans for theological development and to use processes for theological reflection that lead to action.”

The topic of Trinity was part of the theological development program created in the years following the General Chapter of 1997.

During the General Chapter in 2002 in Freising, Germany, there were presentations and discussion on the spirituality of SSND.

Prayer and discernment led to the *Call to Transformation* in which the delegates called “each sister of our international congregation to open her entire life to radical transformation for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ that all creation may be one in the fullness of God’s love.”

To support that call, the first two requirements named were to “give ourselves as apostolic women religious to contemplation as a way of life, drawing ever more deeply from the heart of God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ.”

And to “engage in theological development and theological reflection so that we may clarify, understand, and live our SSND spirituality and charism... in the church and the world of today.”

As we look back we can see that these chapters directed us to ground ourselves in our call as religious described for us in *You Are Sent*:

what are we called to do and **how** are we called to be.

In its call for radical transformation, the *Call to Transformation* began among us a deepening of **who we are**.

In 2007 in Brazil, delegates recognized this time in our history as a new moment “grounded firmly in *You are Sent*” and what we had experienced in striving to live the *Call to Transformation*. The Directional Statement, the *Call to Solidarity*, names three key ways to claim this new moment: First, to recognize in our internationality new potential for acting interdependently among ourselves and with all Creation.

The second key way is to be “convinced anew that education is our response to the cries of creation, the concrete expression of our solidarity with all.”

Then, thirdly, there were two firsts for us in this Directional Statement: the naming of Eucharist as the center of our lives and the reference to Trinity.

“We celebrate Eucharist and live it authentically...United with the self-gift of Christ to God in the Holy Spirit, we are ready to lay down our lives to be bread that is blessed, broken, and shared for the life of the world.”

You might remember that we had a Eucharistic Symposium after this General Chapter.

After this 22nd General Chapter, the General Council wrote the **New Moment** document as an initial interpretation of the Directional Statement. The *Call to Solidarity* is identified as an “expression of the Gospel Call to Mission.”

In the section on A ‘New’ Understanding of Mission, they write: “Gradually the church has recovered the insight that “mission is derived from the very nature of God and that the best theological context for reflection on mission is the doctrine of the Trinity, not the theology of the church or of salvation.”

“Mission actually begins in the very life of the Holy Trinity with the sending of the Incarnate Word and Holy Spirit into the world.”

New Moment document, 2008

One of the six implications of the *Call to Solidarity* presented in the **New Moment** document for the present and future of our SSND life in mission is the understanding that “*You Are Sent* participates in what the Holy Spirit is doing in the church...”

“It is based on solid theology, in particular a solid theology of mission and of the Trinity that continues to be timely after several decades in which intense theological development has taken place in the church. This is extraordinary.”

New Moment document, 2008

The *Call to Transformation* and the *Call to Solidarity* led us to proclaim in *Love Cannot Wait* the following: “In fidelity to our charism of unity in diversity, we commit to deepen the contemplative and prophetic dimensions of our lives by grounding who we are and all we do in the love of the Triune God.”

This was the first time we used the name – Triune God – in one of our Directional Statements.

Our current Directional Statement, *Love Gives Everything*, begins with our mission: “We direct our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.”

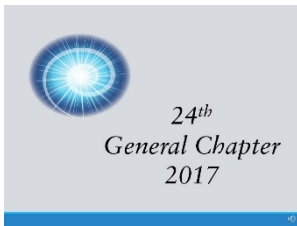
One of the seven statements to help us direct our entire lives is the call to “deepen our consciousness of who we are in relationship with the Triune God, one another, and God’s amazing universe, particularly through theological reflection on the Trinity.”

We hope you can see that our *Spiritual Heritage – St. Augustine and Blessed Theresa* as well as *You are Sent* are grounded in Trinity.

Our Directional Statements over the last 30 years, have evolved in leading us to live *You Are Sent*.

We are now at a time to consider more deeply the mission of Jesus and be more explicit about our need and call to deepen our consciousness of who we are in relationship with the Triune God.

Our call to mission as School Sisters, as baptized people, demands a deeper understanding and openness to God’s mystery in our lives.



Timing – 27:01

General Chapters are sacred events centered on prayer, discernment processes, and sharing of our lives and insights. As a congregation we have grown in our ability to dialogue and communally discern. The 24th General Chapter was a wonderful example of those graces.



Please consider an image of a puzzle as a way of visioning the work of a General Chapter. A puzzle has many parts which we work with to eventually produce a picture, a vision of something.

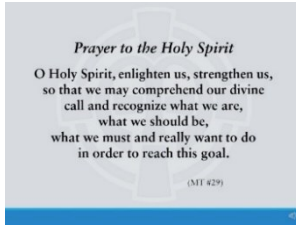
Think of your experiences with puzzles – frustrating, challenging, and exciting when you find the missing piece. Keep this image in mind as you listen to how the General Chapter delegates came to include the statement on deepening our consciousness in relationship with the Triune God.

So... What actually happened at the General Chapter to arrive on this focus of the Trinity?

Let’s look at some of the pieces of the puzzle.

Mother Theresa inspired us with her prayer to the Holy Spirit. The Extended General Council prayed this prayer twice a day during its meeting in 2015 to prepare for the General Chapter. The Congregation then prayed it during the year before the General Chapter.

During the General Chapter we continued to use this as our prayer. For more than two years, the congregation prayed communally and individually to be open to the Spirit.



The prayer never became old. Let us pray together now.

#29, Volume 1, Sowing the Seeds, p. 113

It is interesting to note that in the prayer and theme there is no mention of the Trinity or Triune God. The theme, however, is very clear about our lives – “we joyfully direct our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.”

Sister Mary Maher has noted that “Oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent is a Trinitarian statement because the oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent is the oneness of everything within the Trinity.”

Now let me repeat ... “Oneness for which.....”

Source: Conversation with S. Mary Maher, SSND

Sister Mary Maher, in her reflection on the theme, asked us to consider the following:

- What should we listen for in the days ahead?
- To what might the Holy Spirit be drawing our attention?
- Are we ready to pay the price of such attentive listening?

These questions were repeated as we reflected upon all the reports we received.

Keynote Address

Timing – 31:05

A major influence was the keynote address by Father Don Senior, C.P. We suggest you read and reflect on this address which is on the website. We will present only some specifics from his talk that focus on mission and Trinity.

Father Senior’s reflection was on and I quote “the heart of the gospel mission entrusted to us by the Risen Christ – that we are called to be “one,” even as Jesus and the Father are one – a motif echoed in the striking theme of your chapter.”

Keynote, p. 1.

He claimed we now have a better sense of the “mission entrusted to us by Jesus” – “Mission... includes every aspect of Christian life: our worship, the spirit of our prayer and contemplation, our commitment to justice and peace, our striving for reconciliation and mutual respect among peoples and religious traditions; and our care of creation itself.”

Keynote, p. 3

“Every form of Christian life ...must take its inspiration from the life and mission of Jesus.” With this statement, Father Senior then shared on the mission of Jesus and the Christian Mission. He then says, and I quote,

“The characteristic notes and deep patterns of Jesus’ ministry – his reaching out and his drawing in – can ultimately be traced to Jesus’ own experience of the God of Israel...A God whose unconditional love and startling compassion were more than any human heart could grasp. This God was the ground of Jesus’ being and the foundation of his mission. The Spirit driven intuition of the early community would enable it to see that Jesus not only revealed this God through his ministry but that Jesus himself – in his very being – embodied this divine reality.”

Keynote, Pp. 4, 8-9

Father Senior continues “Here we touch on another intuition of the church’s teaching about mission that has come to the fore in our times, namely that the ultimate theological and biblical foundation for mission is the very life of God, indeed the mystery of the Trinity itself. God embodies the mission impulse – reaching out in self-transcending love - love as an incredible, irrepressible abundance emanating from the very relational being of God,

a love so intense that the three are one,
love surging out into the act of creation,
love extending into the life of a people and their history.

And a love whose ultimate intent is to draw all creation into the unfathomable beauty and vitality of God’s own being – to create a communion among all living things – to become, in the exquisite words of John’s Gospel which your constitution cites: ‘that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you’.”

Keynote, p. 9

Using John’s Gospel, Father Senior asked this question: “If Jesus can be characterized as God’s word to the world, what is it that God wants to say in Jesus?”

The answer: “God’s message is not one of condemnation but redemptive love- this is the heart of the gospel.”

Then, Father Senior said, and I quote, “at the conclusion of his gospel, John completes the circle. The final destiny of Jesus as the Word of God is ultimately communion – oneness – in joy and praise with the God of love who sent him into the world.”

Keynote, pp. 10-11

Finally, in his conclusion, he challenges us, and I quote, ‘A sense of mission that reflects the divine mission in the world and one in harmony with the mission of Christ is... a mission rooted in the very life of the Triune God and one whose goal is the very quest for ultimate life and communion with God. ...the enterprise to which we are called is far more fundamental than any of our concerns and far more crucial than we can imagine.”

Keynote, p. 13

Let us remember “the final destiny of Jesus as the Word of God is ultimately communion – oneness – in joy and praise with the God of love who sent him into the world... And, as in the case of Jesus, so the ultimate endpoint of human destiny is communion with God – when all will be one ‘as you Father in me and I in you, and them in us.’”

Keynote, p. 11

During the first two weeks of the General Chapter, there were many reports – one was the Report on the State of the Congregation: which included

- The Changing Contexts of World and Church
- Our Congregation: Strengths, challenges and recommendations.

We also had a Financial Report, Shalom/UN-NGO Report and a Report from each province.

Delegates listened carefully, had time to reflect, discussed in home community and then periodically had time to integrate what they were hearing. Always asking: have I created an inner space for receiving the Holy Spirit?

These times of individual integration were blessed times of praying and gathering insights from all that was presented.

Finally, delegates were ready to begin to articulate the direction with the question: In light of the theme and all information gathered what is God’s call to the congregation now?

Home Communities named the common elements they felt should be included in the directional statement.

Before analyzing the responses from Home Communities, the Writing Committee read all responses and then each shared what she heard.

After listening to each other, they named the following:

- We are one congregation of one heart and one mind
- Interconnected
- Beyond boundaries
- Rooted in Gospel Poverty
- Oneness of all in the Triune God
- Deepen consciousness of who we are in relationship

With God, others, creation and the universe.

The Writing Committee then analyzed the responses by looking for patterns or themes.

Eight common elements were identified and presented to the delegates.

One of the common elements was - “we are called to deepen our consciousness of who we are in relationship with the Triune God, others, creation and the universe.”

In Home Communities delegates reviewed and discussed the common elements.

Home Communities affirmed the need to deepen our relationship with God, others and creation.

The Writing Committee felt the need to keep the wording -Triune God -in the statement, to clarify and use the term 'universe' as well as include theological reflection. Though Triune God was noted in the previous Directional Statement of 2012, the Committee felt we needed to be more explicit so that the congregation would find ways to deepen the understanding of Trinity.

Feedback was positive on the second draft which became the wording in the actual Directional Statement.

It is important to know that even though Laudato Si was barely two years old, it was included in our conversations at the General Chapter.

Closure

Timing: 41:50

We are a congregation and a church, ever evolving in our understanding of the Trinity.

Our SSND spiritual heritage, *You Are Sent*, church teachings and our own experiences of discernment and study are sources of that evolving for us.

Please visit the Symposium website at www.ssnd.org/trinity2021 for a variety of resources focusing on the Trinity.

We encourage you to read, reflect and share with others your insights and questions.

Individually and communally we are called to grow and evolve as we move into the future.

Our current Directional Statement ends with the challenging words: "The Triune God impels us into the heart of the world to be women of peace, hope and love. In the spirit of Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline, we, the living community, continue to develop our charism according to *You Are Sent*." (YAS, Prologue).

Thank you and many blessings as together we continue to develop our charism.

