

In 1935 the Nobel-prize winning physicist Erwin Schroedinger created a famous thought experiment, known as Schoedinger's Cat. It illustrates one of the basic contradictions between quantum theory and our lived experience of reality -- how quantum particles such as atoms can be in two or more states at the same time. Schroedinger said, imagine putting a cat in a metal box with a glass vial of poisonous gas, a Geiger counter, a hammer, and a radioactive atom, then close the lid. The items are set up in such a way that decay of the atom will activate the Geiger counter, which, in turn, will send the hammer down on the vial, smashing it, killing the cat. The radioactive atom has a 50% probability of decaying in one hour, and if that occurs the cat dies. If not, the cat lives. The atom obeys the rules of quantum mechanics and since its state is undetermined until it's observed by an outside observer, opening the box and observing the decaying atom also determines the status of the cat. But during the time before lifting the box's lid the cat exists simultaneously in two superposed states. The cat is both alive and dead until it is observed. Strange.

Or think about the articles two weeks ago on the colliding black holes three billion light years away that created gravity waves in the universe's space/time continuum (I sound like Dr. Brown from Back to the Future!). Quantum mechanics, relativity . . . we know from our physics classes or science-fiction movies that the universe is very weird. Newton's laws are perfectly adequate physics for everyday life. But underneath all our ordinary experiences is a reality difficult, if not impossible, to get our minds around.

On this Trinity Sunday I use that weirdness of physics as my own analogy for the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. God is weird, weirder than we think – weirder than we even can think. The Catholic Church teaches that God is One, but not solitary. God is One, but God is also three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in that one divine nature. The Father is God whole and entire. The Son is God whole and entire. The Holy Spirit is God whole and entire. And the three Persons are really distinct from one another. But there is still only One God.

This is admittedly strange: three is one, one is three. It doesn't compute any more than a cat being both dead and alive does. The doctrine of the Trinity is what we call a mystery of the faith. A mystery of the faith is a truth revealed by God that we couldn't reason our way to. For instance, other mysteries include the truth that Jesus is both God and Man at the same time. But how can one Person be wholly divine and wholly human? What would that even be like? Mysterious! Or that an all-knowing, all-powerful God transcending time can co-exist with true human free will in time. Weird.

But here we get to the point of my homily. Some non-believers attack our faith for holding these mysteries. They say, "These are irrational cop-outs. Wherever there are contradictions in your religion you just wave a wand over them and called them 'mysteries.'" But, think, wouldn't it be more suspect to believe in a God that human minds could fully comprehend? Such a god I would assume was just an invention of that human mind. I believe it's actually a sign of the

plausibility of Christianity that within it God has revealed Himself as being so weird. Even the physical universe is beyond human experience (a cat both alive and dead at the same time!), why not God?

But it's not only atheists. A devout Jew or Muslim also has no patience with the doctrine of the Trinity. It sounds like three gods to them. But to push my analogy, I would compare these other monotheists with those of us stuck in Newtonian physics, where a cat is either dead or alive, and an atom is either here or there – but not both. Who would have guessed or reasoned to the truth that God is Love – a plural unity – if He hadn't revealed it to us Himself?

But, just as the truths of physics are revealed by mathematics, so the truths of God are revealed by that other strange means of knowledge – faith. Quantum Mechanics seems weird, but the math works out nevertheless, and takes us places beyond our common sense or human experience. Analogously, faith is suspect to those without it,

but will reveal to those with faith weird truths that seem impossible to those without it.

According to the strange celestial quantum mechanics of the Faith God has revealed that the ultimate purpose of the entire universe is our entry into perfect unity with God, who is Love. Even weirder is the truth that the same Trinity, who made the galaxies, rests inside one each of us in a state of grace, as in a temple.

I'll end this Trinity Sunday homily by quoting the greatest Catholic poet, Dante. He ended The Divine Comedy, his great imaginative journey through hell, purgatory, to heaven, by imagining himself in heaven achieving that communion with the Trinity. "Within [the Trinity's] depthless clarity of substance I saw the Great Light shine in three circles in three clear colors bound in one same place . . . How my weak words fall short of my conception . . . As the geometer who tries so hard to square the circle, but cannot discover, think as he may, the principle involved, so did I strive with this new mystery: I yearned to

know how could our image fit into that circle, how could it conform . . .  
then a great flash of understanding struck my mind, and suddenly . . .  
like a wheel in perfect balance turning I felt my will and my desire  
impelled by the love that moves the sun and the other stars.”

That is the nature of the Trinitarian God we worship and are  
meant to be joined with, so sublime that He moves the foundations of  
the starry universe, and so close and small that He was born in manger.  
Mysterious, and strange, and beautiful. But, then, that’s the way God is.