

**Homily for May 22, 2005  
Most Holy Trinity (A)**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9  
Daniel 3:52-55  
2 Corinthians 13:11-13  
John 3:16-18**

## *God shows kindness toward us stiff-necked people.*

God is “a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.”

Though not a definition, these words of Exodus 34 might well be the best description of God to be found in our entire religious tradition. It may not provide us with precise philosophical concepts, but it reveals the face that God turns toward us, a face that is certainly a true likeness of God.

This passage contains three technical covenant words: merciful, a word that comes from the Hebrew for womb and suggests God's intimate attachment to us; kindness, sometimes translated “steadfast love,” which indicates the tenacity of God's commitment to us; and fidelity, which points to God's trustworthiness in our regard. This characterization of God appears in the Exodus story after the people have sinned against God by offering homage to the golden calf (Exodus 32). Moses refers to them as “a stiff-necked people.” It is to such people that God shows kindness.

Folks, it is mighty important for us to remember this, lest we think that God's mercy and graciousness are rewards granted those who are

faithful. No! God doesn't love us any more if we do good or any less if we do bad. God isn't moody. God enters into covenant with and is gracious and merciful toward sinners, stiff-necked people like you and me. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,” of which Paul speaks, is given to those who do not deserve it; “the love of God” is showered on sinners; “the fellowship [community] of the Holy Spirit” is granted to those who are unworthy. It is the mystery of such unbounded generosity that we celebrate on this feast of the Holy Trinity.

The challenge of faith placed before us by this feast is not one of comprehension; for try as we might, we will never really understand the mystery of the Trinity. Rather, it is a challenge of acceptance. We are invited to believe in God's tender working in our lives, and such conviction will prompt us to live out fully that faith.

We're privileged to have with us this evening some of our high school graduates, the class of 2005. After Mass we'll have a little food and savor for a moment the future that is felt so in the persons of those who look to the future of whatever sort – a

future enabled in no small way by the faith they've inherited. I'll invite those graduates to stand so we might acknowledge your accomplishment. We're proud of you and wish you well.

You may remember the television characters, Archie Bunker and his cynical son-in-law, Mike, who says it would be better to ask God to lower the supermarket prices than to thank him for the food. Shocked by such a remark, Archie lays into Mike and says: "This here is a God-fearin' Christian home and when you're sittin' at this table, you're gonna be afraid of God just like the rest of us." Then Edith, the reconciling wife, says: "Oh, Archie, you ain't supposed to be afraid of God. I ain't. God loves us. Oh, Archie, your God ain't my God."

No, our God and the God hopefully we've passed on to our graduates is of a different sort, one that shows kindness to us stiff-necked people.