“God by Any Other Name Would Love as Much”

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9
Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
John 3:16-18

My last name has always been a challenging one to pronounce for people who don’t know our family. It has a bunch of commonly used letters in it but they are in a strange order apparently. C-I-A-C-I-U-R-A, pronounced (sī-KŪR-a). I never understood the problem.

Throughout my life I have always dreaded roll call or attendance because invariably when my name came up the person would say, “Joe....” then there would be a long and awkward silence that few others ever had to deal with. I would usually break the silence myself with the correct pronunciation of the name and then a comment or two would usually follow by the person trying to figure it out. I began to refer to myself as “Joey Long-Pause” because it happened so often.

Even stranger was that after three years of Latin, my Latin teacher in High School actually told me that I was pronouncing my name wrong!
She said, “it should be pronounced ‘cha-CHÜ-ra’ you know?” To which I responded, “well ‘sī-KŪR-a’ is how my parents told me it was pronounced, so I’m going to go with that.” Technically, she was right, that was the European pronunciation of it but we weren’t in Europe. I wasn’t trying to be disrespectful but I’d been dealing with this for so long I just wasn’t in the mood to discuss it. The name as a matter of fact is Polish and not Italian like a lot of people think when they look at it or hear it. Depending on the situation however, I often just go with the flow. Having gone to DeSales which was a predominantly Italian school, I thought, “why make waves”. In fact, my sister was actually asked to apply for the Italian Club scholarship because of the Italian sounding name and her good grades ... I was not!?

Anyway, our names are very important and given to us to identify us and can tell others a lot about us but they do not convey our complete identity. Our true identity is defined by our family or our country of origin and so on but more importantly our true identity is defined by our actions, our beliefs, what we do and how we do it. It is ALL of our various attributes that make us unique and define our true
identity. Today is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, when we reflect on the true identity of God which is the awesome mystery at the heart of our faith: God is one being united in three persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And these three persons are the same being, consubstantial, distinct only in their relation to one another: the Lover, the Beloved and the Love shared between them.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the names that we use to convey this identity but the ultimate identity of God is Love; it is an identity which sums up all of the attributes of God. So this name God, Yahweh, LORD, whichever one we use, reveals to us not only **WHO** God is but it also reveals to us our relationship to Him and why we exist at all.

Moses experienced this today in our first reading. The identity of God and his attributes are revealed to Moses in the giving of His name “LORD”: “merciful and gracious”, “slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity”. These are just some of the qualities that define the LORD but they are also ways in which Love is expressed. More importantly God is revealing himself to Moses so that the Israelites, despite being a
“stiff-necked people”, would know that God is coming to them to receive them as His own and to “pardon [their] wickedness and sins”. Ultimately, God is revealing Himself to the Israelites, through the expression of active Love so that they may live in a special relationship with Him in the Promised Land and beyond.

We hear this also today in the often sited passage from the Gospel of John: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son”. This is what we celebrate at Christmas when God became man through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father in Heaven was united with humanity on earth by becoming one of us in the person of the Son in order to redeem humanity from the curse of sin which of course was accomplished through the Son’s death, resurrection and ascension. All of which we celebrated in Lent and the Easter season we just finished. Today’s Gospel tells us why God did all of this: so that we “might not perish but might have eternal life.” He did not come to condemn us; He came to save us. This is the fulfillment of Moses’ plea to the LORD, “pardon our wickedness and sins, and receive us as your own.” This
is the ultimate act of Love! By becoming one of us we have become one with him united through Love.

The identity of the Most Holy Trinity has not only been revealed to us through the Love shared but also dwells within each of us when we share that Love with one another. Paul tells us this in the Second Reading when he says, “encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.” We are called get to know the full identity of God by sharing the Love of the Trinity through our assistance to one another, our prayers for one another and our solidarity with one another. When we do, we are putting our belief in the Trinity into action and accepting the FATHER’S offer to eternal life won by the SON through the Love shared in the HOLY SPIRIT. In other words, we come to experience the fullness of God’s identity by Loving God and others with the same Love he has for us.

Each of us has our own unique identity comprised of the multitude of various attributes we each possess; some good, others maybe not as good. The one thing however, that each of us possess is
an offer to experience the Divine Life of God in the Most Holy Trinity. And although fully understanding the Trinity is a mystery of faith we can \textit{KNOW} it by its other name; one that has a lot of commonly used letters arranged in a very familiar order, L-O-V-E.