



*Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity. Let us give glory to Him because He has shown His mercy to us. (Antiphon for Holy Trinity)*

God's proper nature is *agape*, namely a deep, selfless love. This *agape* is shared among the persons of the Holy Trinity in undivided Unity. God created Adam to be an object of His *agape*. Adam in turn was to reflect that love back to God, and to "pay it forward" by extending the same love to the "bone of (his) bones and flesh of (his) flesh," namely his wife, whom God had formed from one of his ribs and gifted to him. And together, they were to be fruitful, multiply, and lead one large family of persons living into eternity, bound in *koinonia* (intimate fellowship) to their Triune Godhead and to each other by that very same *agape*.

All of this was shattered when Adam rejected God's selfless love and instead selfishly strove to become his own god. In so doing, he brought sin and death into the world. We are all thus tainted and none of us can save ourselves. But God, out of His *agape* for us as His special creatures, sent His Son to take on our flesh, suffer and die on the Cross to atone for our sins, and rise again that we might once again be declared right and restored to *koinonia* with Him, and with each other.

We speak often of Christian ethics, and the discussions can get quite complex. In the end, though, these conversations all flow from that very same *agape* manifest in our triune God, that He has shown toward us. In the words of our Savior, "This is my commandment, that you love (*agapao*, the verb form of *agape*) one another as I have loved (*agapao*) you." (John 15:12) Simply put then, ethics informed by Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions remind us that in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are free to share God's selfless love with each other and with our neighbors, including the tiniest and weakest among us. Though saved, we remain sinner-saints, and need constant reminders. When we fail, which we will, we know that with repentance, there is forgiveness and refreshment at the foot of the Cross. In the end, we look forward with certain hope to the Last Day, on which we will be bodily resurrected to an eternal life of bliss in the New Jerusalem, bound in *koinonia* to our Triune God and to each other by *agape* as He originally intended, and never again to be shattered!

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*