

Trinity Sunday

When I was in the seminary, I had a professor that taught our class on the Trinity. She was a brilliant scholar that had written her PhD thesis on something that none of us could understand. One of her particular passions for study was the Trinity. She said that she had spent hours upon hours praying about and contemplating the Most Holy Trinity. She also told us that she had never heard a satisfying homily about the Trinity (on Trinity Sunday) while at Mass. Most homilies, she said, were very basic and didn't go into much depth. Seeing as how 99.9% of the people in the pews do not have a PhD it shouldn't surprise anyone that the homily about the Trinity does not get very deep. This is not said to insult anyone. If anyone, including myself, heard a homily on a PhD level it would most likely go right over our heads, and we would probably get very little out of it.

For example, remember when some of the Mass parts changed a few years ago when the 3rd edition of the Roman Missal came out? When the priest started Mass by saying "The Lord be with you." The people used to respond, "And also with you." It got changed to "and with your spirit." Well, some of the other changes came in the Nicene Creed that we say together right after the homily. Everybody's favorite new word became "consubstantial". It might still be your favorite new word. Imagine trying to act out this word in a game of Charades.

Well, this word "consubstantial" happens to be an important word. In this one word it describes an aspect of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. The first three letters "con" mean "with". And the rest of the word "substantial" means "substance". So, the word "consubstantial" simply means "with the same substance". In other words, we are saying that Jesus is of the same substance as God the Father. Jesus is divine. He is God. The reason for this word, and why it is so important, is that there were some people that denied that Jesus was God. They claimed that Jesus was just a holy man, but he wasn't God. The Church had to declare definitively that, yes, Jesus is God. He is God the Son, and He is of the same divine nature as God the Father.

We heard in the Gospel reading Jesus told His disciples, "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth." (Jn 16:12-13) After Pentecost, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were led into all truth, and to understand all that Jesus taught them. One aspect of the truth was that, as the Messiah, Jesus was also God. He wasn't just a messenger, or an angel, or just a holy man. He was, in fact, God.

And since it is Trinity Sunday, we cannot forget the Holy Spirit – the third person in the Trinity. Also in our Gospel reading, Jesus said, "Everything that the Father has is mine." Jesus also said, The Spirit "will take from what is mine and declare it to you." (Jn 16:15) There is this flow, or procession, of what belongs to the Father is given to the Son. The Son receives from His Father and gives to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit receives from the Son and declares to us. The Holy Spirit pours forth the gift of knowledge upon us (see Jn 14:25-26). We are recipients of God's grace to have knowledge and wisdom to understand the truth about the special relationship of the Most Holy Trinity, and God's plan of salvation for His people.

St. Paul understood this, and we heard what he wrote in our second reading. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. . . . because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Rom 5:1-2, 5) If you take anything with you from this homily about the Trinity (besides knowing what the word “consubstantial” means) I would like you to know that we are invited to share in the life of the Trinity. This is the gift that Jesus won for us by His sacrifice on the cross, by His resurrection, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And may we always have a great appreciation and deep gratitude for the gift that we have been given in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.