Homily November 1, 2020, All Saints Day

The Doctrine of the Trinity is the Central Mystery of our Faith. God is One nature. AND God is Three Persons. This doctrine is a unique belief that we believe only because God has revealed it to us.

One of the reasons it is the Central Mystery is because our lives are supposed to flow from it. Our lives at home and in society flow from the understanding AND the experience that there is unity and distinctiveness in God's very being.

We have been made in the image and likeness of God. And so we are to live a unity that also respects and promotes each person in our uniqueness. And as the Church, we are unified as the Body of Christ, each of us as particular members of that body. We are each the individual Christ made us.

In this world today, embracing both our unity and our distinctiveness is hard. Yet it mirrors what our destiny is in Christ. The hope of heaven is not an absorption into a great blandness, as a drop disappears into an ocean.

God has made each of us – and God's desire is that we will all be what He has made us to be. Our daily work on earth is to be that – unique, and yet unified.

Peter Kreeft in his book, <u>Fundamentals of Faith</u>, writes this: (P. 296) "Christian unity, like divine unity, is the unity among lovers, not monolithic indistinguishability. When we unite, we shall remain ourselves, and even increase our distinctive selves. <u>The three most distinctive characters in all reality are the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. The Most distinctive human persons are the saints. God is both one and many; therefore his people are both one and many.</u>"

=-=-=-=-=

On All Saints Day, we remember our unity in Christ through the Holy Spirit. We remember our common destiny. The saints had many things in common: their love of the Eucharist; their prayer; their devotion to the Blessed Mother; and their love for God and their neighbor through service and kindness.

=-=-=-=-=

Each saint was also an individual with a particular combination of interests and skills. On this day we celebrate how in Christ, their uniqueness shines forth.

I mention three individuals who have been beatified this year. Being declared "Blessed" is the second-to-last step in being Canonized a Saint.

First – from Italy, Blessed Maria Velotti, who died in Eighteen Eighty-six at the age of fifty-nine, and was a professed religious.

Second – Blessed Carlo Acutis from Assisi, who died fourteen years ago at the age of fifteen from Leukemia. He was into sports, the computer, and a deep devotion to the Eucharist.

And Third – from the United States, this weekend Fr. Michael McGivney, who died in Eighteen-Ninety, has been declared "Blessed." Fr. McGivney is best known for having started the Knights of Columbus. It was started with a small parish group as a mutual aid society, to provide financial assistance, in the event of the men's death, to their widows and orphans.

This cross-section of just three recent beatifications shows how beautifully unique each member of Christ's body is.

=-=-=-=-=

And the word "beatify" is a word that recalls today's Gospel Reading. The Beatitudes speak of those who are blessed in the Kingdom.

The Beatitudes are the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. They have always been seen as our Christian parallel to the Ten Commandments. They are our marching orders. And so we read them on All Saints Day, and on various Feast days of saints. They are one of the options for Weddings, and for Funerals. They guide us through our Christian lives.

Half of the Beatitudes speak to us when we are vulnerable and downtrodden. The other half encourages us to actively pursue goodness and charity.

=-=-=-=-=

I mention just one of the Beatitudes today, "Blessed are the meek…"

Another word to translate "Meek" in the Greek New Testament, and arguably a better translation, is "Gentle."

This word is also found later in Matthew's gospel (11:29), when our Lord uses the same word, saying, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart…"

The word "Gentleness" is a good way to understand this Beatitude. For the past thirty years people have sometimes said, "Nowhere in the gospels does Jesus tell us to be nice." The suggestion is that Christians too often let people walk all over them. But the phrase "church of nice" has been used recently as an insult. And the phrase is sometimes used as excuse to be cruel and hurtful to others in the name of truth and goodness.

But what are other words we associate with "nice?" They include: gentleness, kindness, patience, humility, self-sacrifice. And these words are not only used in the New Testament. The New Testament in fact identifies them as Christian virtues. And none of them is associated with cruelty and insult.

Meekness, or gentleness, assumes strength that is being moderated for the care of others. Parents are strong, and they are gentle with infants.

This is how one Scripture Scholar puts it: "…To be gentle…is the ability to accomplish what is right without harming someone or their human dignity in the process…When someone is gentle, they are persistent and unwavering while being respectful and helpful at the same time. It should be pointed out that being respectful of others does not mean we do what they want but that we do what God wants for them. Gentleness always includes such faithful respect…Jesus was gentle in how He treated the sinner and the saint so as to lead both of them in the same path of discipleship. Those who are gentle trust in the power of truth rather than that of violence or force."

=-=-=-=-=

We have enough details of the lives of the saints to know that some of them were hard to live with. But that is not why they are saints. They are saints because they loved as we were reminded to love in last week's gospel. They loved God first and totally. And they loved others as they loved themselves.

And God took that love, and transformed them.

God does that with us as well.

When we look to the saints today – we remember what God is doing with us, whenever we Love Him first and totally – and love our neighbor as ourselves.

=-=-=-=-=