

Homily for Trinity Sunday, 2021:

The Trinity is Dogma and Doctrine. As such, it is a mystery we must believe in. But God as Trinity is not simply an intellectual statement – as important as clearly stated and well-reasoned intellectual statements are. Because we have a relationship with God, the Trinity is a reality we are immersed in. To live a life in God, to be given the gifts and graces of God, we live and move in the life of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It is simple, and yet profound, and still more – it is puzzling. God is ONE by virtue of that being a basic quality of the divine Nature. And, unlike anything else in our own experience, God is THREE Persons.

Part of how we are able to grasp this mystery – in our limited way – is to immerse ourselves in it as much as possible. For that reason, we embrace both of these truths equally. God is: Three Persons in One Divine Nature; and One God in Three Persons.

And our official prayers embrace the paradox of God’s revelation (note, not contradiction, but paradox).

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The Church embraces this mystery of God’s revelation in the prayers of the Mass. In a little while we will experience this embrace in the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer which is prayed right before the Holy, Holy, Holy. Again, God is both One in Nature and Three divine Persons. In embracing the magnificent mystery of God, today’s Preface allows us to celebrate that they go together.

Listen to what we will be hearing in a few minutes.

“For with your Only Begotten Son and the Holy Spirit you are one God, one Lord: not in the unity of a single person, but in a Trinity of one substance.”

I was talking with someone when they all of a sudden made a connection for the first time. The groups who hold to the belief of Unitarianism chose that name precisely to distinguish themselves from the historical Christian belief in the Trinity. It simplifies God as one unit. For them, the Tri-unity of God is perhaps only an appearance, or how one experiences God, or how God operates.

But that is not how Our Lord has spoken of Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit.

To go on with today's Preface:

“For what you have revealed to us of your glory
we believe equally
of your Son and of the Holy Spirit,
so that, in the confessing of the true and eternal Godhead,
you might be adored in what is proper to each Person,
their unity in substance,
and their equality in majesty.”

“For this is praised by Angels and Archangels, ...”

There is only One God, but there are Three divine persons equal in power, majesty and love. They do not share divinity, nor are they parts of God. Each possesses fully the one divine nature.

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This mystery affects our prayer life. All three divine persons can be talked to, and we have many prayers addressed to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. But our liturgical prayers teach us our relationship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

At the Mass, most of our prayers are to God as Father. But that does not leave out the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christ and the Holy Spirit are enabling us to pray, and They are active in every aspect of the Mass. We offer Sacrifice to the Father, which becomes the Body and Blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the great ending to the Eucharistic Prayer goes,

“Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever.”

This sums up the dynamic of the prayers we officially pray.
We pray to the Father.
We pray and live through, with, and in the Son.
We are unified in the Holy Spirit.

And all glory and honor belong to the Father through, with, and in Christ, who with the Father is unified in the Holy Spirit.

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As with prayer, our lives can better be lived when seen in the context of the Triune God working in the world and our lives.

The creed tells us that everything was made through and in the Son and given life by the Holy Spirit.

Many throughout the centuries have modeled their teaching on this dynamic. Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, who lived in the Fourth Century, said this:

“God is above all things as Father, for he is principle and source; he is through all things through the Word; and he is in all things in the Holy Spirit.”

And later in the same document, he says:

“But when we share in the Spirit, we possess the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Spirit himself.”

With this in mind, the reflection of Auxiliary Bishop Mueggenburg of Seattle, Washington on Christ’s great commission to the Church in the weekend’s gospel begins in this way:

“The first ministry Jesus commands His disciples to carry out is that of Baptism. Baptism is more than just a religious ceremony or ritual; rather, Baptism is the means by which we become sharers in the Divine Life of God. This gift of Divine Life involves all the Persons of the Holy Trinity. In Baptism, we become adopted children of the Father in the family of God. . . Baptism also makes us a living Temple of the Holy Spirit. . . We also become members of the Body of Jesus Christ on earth.”

One of the things Pope Francis is asking us to do is spend a year reflecting on Family. Starting back in March, he has asked us to read again his book from five years ago On Love in the Family.

The Latin title of the document is Amoris Latitia – which are the first two words of the exhortation, which means “The Joy of Love. That first sentence is:

“The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.”

In this book, the Holy Father says:

“...The word of God tells us that the family is entrusted to a man, a woman and their children, so that they may become a communion of persons in the image of the union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

How does a family image the union of the Trinity? Pope Francis mentions two examples.

“Begetting and raising children, for its part, mirrors God’s creative work.

And

The family is called to join in daily prayer, to read the word of God and to share in Eucharistic communion, and thus to grow in love and become ever more fully a temple in which the Spirit dwells.”

What we say of family, we can also say of our membership in the Church. Bishop Mueggenburg says this:

“The fellowship of the Most Holy Trinity is the foundation of a solid Christian life. When we learn to live as children of the Father, we become brothers and sisters in Jesus who are united in that love which is the Holy Spirit.

Our companionship with Jesus sustains us and gives us encouragement to face challenges.

Our identity as children of a loving Father inspires us to please the Father in all that we do.

The enthusiasm of the Holy Spirit leads us to seek God’s will for our lives in each situation.”

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Living our lives in the Triune God, we can always know we are not alone. I quote Bishop Mueggenburg one more time regarding our Gospel passage today:

“...the final words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew are a promise of His lasting presence with the Church when He says, “I am with you always until the end of the world.” At the very beginning of Matthew’s Gospel, we were told that Jesus would be “Emmanuel”, a name that means “God with us” (see Mt 1:22–23). Now, Jesus

promises to be “God with us” and thus reveals Himself as Emmanuel in this final verse. We are never alone when we carry out the mission that Jesus entrusted to us.”