

Trinity Sunday 2009

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday where we focus on the central Catholic belief, that God is three in one, that we worship three persons in one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I'm hoping that my homily today will waste everyone's time. If no one learns a thing from my homily, if everyone walks out of here disappointed and saying to themselves that they already knew all of that, then I'll be thrilled, and you'll have my apologies for the seven minutes of your life I'll have wasted.

But I'm going to give this homily anyways because I'm not sure that's going to be the case. I'm not positive everyone is as sure as they should be when it comes to a basic understanding of the Trinity.

One reason that I wonder about how well people get this is because I work a lot with junior high and high school students here at the parish. For the most part most of what they should know about the faith they do know. But as I've taught and discussed things with them a surprisingly large handful of them can't explain the basic things that every Catholic should know about the Trinity.

So if teenagers are getting this wrong why am I talking to the whole parish about it? After all aren't adults smarter than teenagers, don't we know things they don't?

Yes, in theory at least that's true, adults are generally smarter than teenagers, and please junior high and high school students don't take that as an insult, let it be something that gives you hope that some day you'll be even smarter than you are now. Adults are generally smarter than teenagers, but when it comes to remembering some of the particulars of the Catholic faith teenagers might actually have an advantage. They are

more likely to have been recently taught and tested on certain aspects of the faith. It's been awhile since most adults have been quizzed or graded on their understanding of the Trinity. So if teenagers who have been are still getting things wrong here, then it's probably pretty likely that some adults need some help in this area as well.

So for the sake of all of us here, and that includes myself, writing this homily was a good refresher and review for me, I'm going to lay out some of the basic things we need to know about the Trinity. This is basically an explanation of some of the things which we affirm when we say the Nicene Creed, which we'll recite together in a few minutes.

So, when it comes to the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, The Father is God.

The Son, Jesus Christ, is God.

And the Holy Spirit is God.

All three persons of the Trinity are fully, one hundred percent, completely and equally divine. The Son is no less divine than the Father, and the Holy Spirit is no less divine than the Father or the Son.

Also, sometimes people tend to separate the roles of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Usually when this happens people talk about the Father creating us, the Son saving us, and the Holy Spirit sending his gifts to make us holy.

Now there are some distinctions when it comes to the three Persons of the Trinity; only Jesus became man, it was only the Father Jesus prayed to in the Garden of Gethsemane, and it was the Holy Spirit who came to the disciples in a particular way at Pentecost. (Acts 2:4)

But these distinctions don't do away with the fundamental unity of the work of the Trinity.

God the Father created us.

So did God the Son,

And so did the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ saves us from our sins.

So does the Father.

And so does the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit works within us, changes us, and makes us holy.

So does the Father.

And so does the Son.

When we recite the Creed we affirm that Jesus proceeds from the Father, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

This means that the Son has his origin in the Father, and the Holy Spirit has his origin in the Father and the Son, but, it has been like this from all eternity.

The Father has always been.

The Son has always been.

And the Holy Spirit has always been.

The fact that the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father does not mean they are not divine, it doesn't mean they are created beings, it doesn't mean there was ever a moment, when they did not exist.

When we begin mass in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, when mass ends with a blessing given in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and when we recite the Creed after the homily, as we will in a few moments, we are affirming that we believe in one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that the three persons of this one God are absolutely, completely, and equally divine.

To deny this belief, is to replace the true God with one of our own making. Anyone who does not affirm this is not worshipping the God of Christianity.

So there is a lot at stake here, everything is at stake here.

Let us follow the one eternal God, let us follow the true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who has created us, who has offered us his salvation, and who is at work shaping and transforming his people.