

Trinity Sunday C “Mens Notitia Sui and Amor Sui”
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This weekend we celebrate Trinity Sunday. We celebrate Three Persons in One God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a dreaded weekend for many homilists because what can be said, the argument goes, about a matter that ultimately boils down to mystery.

I tend to disagree. The mystery of the Trinity is at the heart of our faith. This makes every Sunday Trinity Sunday. Let’s take a closer look at our first reading from Proverbs chapter 8.

“Thus says the Wisdom of God, the Lord begot me, the beginning of his ways, from of old I was poured forth, at the first, before the mountains and hills were settled into place, before the earth was made, indeed, before the heavens were made, I was there.”

When the Wisdom of God comes forth from God, notice that she is not a creature. I say she, because the Hebrew for Wisdom is feminine interestingly enough. In Greek, her name is Sophia. For Catholic theologians, the understanding of God cannot be limited to any one gender. God perfects both genders and infinitely transcends them.

When the Wisdom of God comes forth from God, she is not a creature, why? She was present even before there was a creation. She was begotten, not made. Wisdom says that she was beside God as his craftsman, the one in whom God makes the world.

Who is Proverbs talking about? Proverbs is foreshadowing what is happening in the very first chapter of the Gospel of John, in the beginning was the Word...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. For John, Sophia from Proverbs is a reference to Christ, the eternal Logos, the Word from the Father’s lips. Christ is not a creature, he is begotten by God, poured forth from God, begotten not made. We say that in the creed every Sunday, do we not? Christ is God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through him all things were made. Remember back in the book of Genesis when God says, “let us make man in our own image”, who is he speaking to? Even in the beginning, God is speaking to his other, to his Logos, to his Wisdom. In and through this Wisdom, God makes the world.

My friends, we are getting closer to what the Church is talking about when we speak of the Holy Trinity. St. Augustine in his work, *De Trinitate*, gave several analogies as to how to understand the Holy Trinity. He believed that, if you want to know something about the Trinity, just take a look inside yourself. Why? Genesis says we are made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, if we take

a look inside of us, we should be able to know something that will illuminate the mystery of the Trinity.

So, bear with me and consider your mind for a moment. The mind, what St. Augustine would refer to as *the mens*, is at the seat of our consciousness, but the mind also has the ability to remake itself or dialogue with itself. Let's ponder on an odd example: How often do we talk to ourselves? I realize this may be more true for some than for others. However, think about it, how often do we ask questions like, who am I? Where am I going?

Sometimes we use the plural. Not in a crazy way, but in a natural way, like what are we going to do today? Have you noticed this? Well, St. Augustine did and spent considerable amount of time thinking about this.

He noticed how the mind, *the mens*, often poses questions to another who is nevertheless your self. From the mind comes forth what St. Augustine called, *notitia sui*, or knowledge of self. In my mind, I can project myself as another.

St. Augustine reasoned that by the act of knowing myself, by projecting myself as another, I can then have love for myself. Not in an egotistic way, although that is a danger, but I can love myself in a healthy way, in a holy way. St. Augustine called this love of self *amor sui*.

And this happens in spiritual direction and psychological counseling all the time, does it not? The therapist asks questions that will help the client project himself out, to see himself objectively, hopefully coming to a deeper appreciation or love for himself.

Mens, notitia sui, amor sui. The mind, knowledge of self, and love of self, these are three distinct realities going on in the soul, and yet we are still one person. Are you all still with me now? Excellent! If not, too bad. I am continuing on.

So look, who is the Father for St. Augustine? The Father is God's *mens*, God's mind, God's elemental divine energy, the unbegotten one, the source, personified as the Father. Who is the Son? The Son is the Father's perfect self-image, his *notitia sui*, his self-knowledge, his logos, his wisdom. The Son is not a creature. The Son was always there as the mirror of the Father. Now, when the Father looks at the Son, what does he see?

The Father sees the perfection of Wisdom, the perfection of Love, the perfection of Truth, the perfection of Goodness, and the perfection of Beauty. The Father is eternally in love with the Son, and this love, this *amor sui*, love of self, processes forth from the Father and the Son as the Holy Spirit.

Unlike us, in the eternal perfection of the life of God, the mind, knowledge of self, and love of self, are necessarily Persons. Why? The knowledge of self of a perfect God is also a perfect projection of self, constituting a distinct person. The love of self shared between the Father and the Son, outside space and time, is best

understood as a perfect and eternal procession of Father and Son, processing forth as a third separate person, the Holy Spirit, naturally creative, spilling over into all of creation. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons? Yes! One God? Yes! One in mind, one in love for each other, and one in essence.

My friends, we get a major insight that prefigures Augustine's theology in Proverbs again. The Wisdom of God says, "Before the heaven were there, I was beside him as his craftsman, and I was his delight day by day, playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of the earth; and I found delight in the human race."

And so, let's talk about how we could celebrate Trinity Sunday every day. We go back to our starting point with the revelation that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and so, you can begin by allowing your mind to reflect on yourself. You see, when you reflect on yourself, you will then come to knowledge of yourself. And then, the invitation this Trinity Sunday is to give yourself permission to love yourself, not in a conceited way, but in a healthy way, a holy way.

It is amazing how often we can share compassion and love with others that we refuse to offer ourselves. However, Jesus commands us to love others as we love ourselves. This presupposes that we have a healthy love for ourselves. If sin is getting in the way, try the sacrament of reconciliation. That is why we have this sacrament. God wants your mind to know yourself and experience healing so you are free to love yourself, in a holy and healthy way.

But we are not finished yet. The invitation then is to allow our love for self to process out from our very being, allow that love to process out to others, to become a healthy and holy love for your family, a healthy and holy love for your coworkers, a healthy and holy love for the poor, the environment and the world.

Remember, Christians, so much as you contemplate and love everything that is good, true and beautiful in yourself, you are participating in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. And by doing so, every day becomes Trinity Sunday.