

Trinity Sunday “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

Fr. Frank Schuster

Let’s begin, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” Do you see what we just did? We just celebrated Trinity Sunday! We just celebrated what we teach, profess and believe. We said, “In the name” rather than “in the names” because we teach, profess and believe in one God. The ancient Hebrews understood that if we are going to believe in the idea of God, God cannot be more than one. Why? By definition God is almighty. Anything less would be less than almighty and not be God. You cannot have two or more gods who claim to be almighty. That would be nonsensical. You could say they would be mighty, but not almighty, and therefore not God by definition, necessitating us to look elsewhere. If by definition God is almighty, then there can be only one. Even the devil, as powerful and cunning as he can be, is still only a creature and therefore falls infinitely short to the omnipotence inherent in a logical definition of God. Even the time and space we operate in are creatures. They are creations. God, as Creator, infinitely and eternally transcends his created things. Have you ever looked up at the sky at night and contemplated the vastness of the universe? God is infinitely more.

This is why Moses in our first reading from Deuteronomy said to the people, "Ask now of the days of old, before your time, ever since God created man upon the earth; ask from one end of the sky to the other: Did anything so great ever happen before? Was it ever heard of? Did a people ever hear the voice of God..., as you did, and live?" My friends, Moses is marveling that the omnipotent and infinite God has spoken to the human race. Indeed, we would know little about God unless he spoke to us. And when he speaks to the people of the Old Testament, the divine agenda is to gather us to himself through the covenants. You want to summarize the Old Testament in one sentence? God calls us to be a people of his own.

And so, let’s begin again. “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” The one God has been revealed to us in the time and space we find ourselves as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 1+1+1= hmmm. Perhaps we can think of one God and three Persons in this way. Early Church theologian Tertullian suggested that the Trinity could be understood by analogy by considering the sun in the sky, the beam of light from the sun, and the spot on the wall where the light rests as being three distinct ideas nevertheless representing one reality. At the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, where we get our Creed, although they opted for biblical language for the Father as the unbegotten one, Christ as the begotten one, and the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father and the Son, to escape tritheism the councils introduced a new non-biblical word, “consubstantial”, in Greek “homoousios”, to articulate that although God has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are nevertheless consubstantial, of the same substance with one another. A way to wrap our minds around this is every human being in our lives is a distinct person however we all share the same nature, namely being human. We are one in our human nature. Similarly, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three revealed persons who share the same nature, “Godness” if you will, eternally one with each other in their divine nature. In a system outside of space and time, this makes for an effective dynamic monotheism without falling into the problems of polytheism.

But how can this help our understanding of God in a deeper and more meaningful way? St. Augustine asked this question in his book *De Trinitate*. He suggested that the council's language can be best applied from what we see in scripture. For St. Augustine, the first letter of John chapter 4, verse 16, gives us a good starting point for understanding the nature of God when he says "God is love". St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 argues that when everything else is stripped away, faith, hope and love remain, and the greatest of these is love. Without love we are nothing. And so, from the biblical witness of love, St. Augustine argued that we can understand God the Father as the lover, God the Son as the beloved, and God the Holy Spirit as the love spirating forth from the Father and the Son. We have three persons in one God eternally in a procession of love. And this love is creative. Creation is created out of nothing from the love of the eternal God who is an eternal procession of love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. St. Bernard of Clairvaux in his *Sermon on the Song of Songs* was even more explicit with St. Augustine's analogy. God the Father for the great Bernard is the Kisser, God the Son is the kissed, and God the Holy Spirit is the kiss spirating from the Father and the Son blessing all of creation.

And so, just before ascending into heaven, Jesus told his apostles to share his gift of divine love to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Our baptism unites our human nature to Jesus' divine nature, making us truly a people of God. Or as St. Paul puts it in our second reading, "The Spirit himself bears witness...that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ". Reborn in baptism, we are nourished by the Eucharist. When we receive Christ we are to be Christ to the world as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This evangelization should begin in our hearts, blessing those around us, and process out into the community as a Eucharistic people transubstantiating the world around us by the power of God love.

And so, as we drive home today we can ask ourselves the important question, how does my life participate in the life of the Holy Trinity? Think about it. How does my life participate in the procession of love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit? What are the areas of my life that aren't participating in the life of the Holy Trinity? What are the areas in my life that I need to be more open to the dynamic and transformative love of God? Who are the difficult people in my life that I need to share that love with? As I look in the mirror, how can I allow my nature to become more deeply one with God's nature through a relationship with Jesus? The meaning of this feast day is clear in that everything in our world that helps us to grow closer to the Holy Trinity should be pursued. Everything that distances us from the Holy Trinity should be avoided. This is why the feast day of the Holy Trinity is so important. We are challenged to consider this week that everything we pursue in this life should begin and end in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.