

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity “The Value of Presence” 2026

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When I was a kid, with usually about two weeks left before the beginning of summer break, this time of year was at times unbearable. It was as if time slowed down. Each time I looked to the clock in the classroom, seconds moved like minutes and minutes like hours. Does that experience sound familiar? However, eventually, homework assignments were completed, papers turned in, and it was time for the end of the year party in our classroom. Remember those? After popcorn and cupcakes, awards would be handed out, like who got the best grades, who was the kindest, who was the best servant leader, all good, but the one that cracked me up the most was the “perfect attendance” award. Remember that award? This award was handed out to kids who never missed a day of class that year. Now please don’t get me wrong, but this award really irritated me. It irritated me because, for one, these were the same kids who came to school sick and got the rest of us sick, causing us to miss school and not get that award. However, I had another reason why I rolled my eyes at that award, a reason that I am not proud about today. You see, at the time, an award for simply being present in class and for no other merit than simply being there in my mind didn’t seem worthy of an award. As time went on, I even started to think of birthdays and anniversaries a little bit like that award. It felt like, OK we are celebrating the fact we are still here and breathing. Woo Hoo!

What changed my mind about all of that was attending anniversary celebrations of loved ones over the years...and suffering the loss of loved ones too. How many people in our lives do we so deeply desire to celebrate another birthday with? Anniversaries are important too in that respect. You know what I learned from couples and priests whose vocations have survived over the years? A big reason why they are still married or still a priest is because of (you guessed it) attendance, they remained present in their vocations to their spouse or to their ministry as is in the case of a priest, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, day after day after day. It’s beautiful when you think about it this way and wonderful too. Life doesn’t always work out that way, we all get that. However, as I admire people who have been at it much longer than me in their vocations, the values of perfect attendance and presence in this sense are very big deals and worthy of celebration. Follow?

I mention this because I think this is a way of appreciating this weekend’s celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. We think of God as being one and three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Theologians like to think in Chalcedonian terms of thinking of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being three Persons who are completely one in their divine nature. You can hear that language in the prayers the missal gives us today at mass. Another way of looking at it though is through a hermeneutic of love. This is because God is love. Bishop Barron suggests, following the thoughts of St. Augustine, that in the inner life of God we can see the Father eternally forgetting himself in love of the Son and the Son eternally forgetting himself in love for the Father. We can then see the Holy Spirit eternally processing outwards as the love between Father and Son (filioque). Another way of saying this is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one because they have perfect attendance. Get it? They are perfectly present to one another for all eternity in such a way that you can only understand them as being three and yet one. Salvation consists of being welcomed into that eternal presence.

Indeed, Jesus says to his disciples in our Gospel reading, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." The doorway to salvation opened to us, you see, because God chose to be present to us in the incarnation. When we truly believe this in our hearts, we are then able to be present to God in return. Saint Paul articulates the same thing when he blesses us with the words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." Jesus redemptive activity in the world welcomes us into the eternal presence of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[What does that mean for our confirmandi? The words that you will hear when you receive the sacrament momentarily are, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit". You can think of a seal as a signature. In ancient times, when a letter was sent from the king, it would have wax seal that was stamped by the king's ring. It was how you knew that the letter was in fact from the king and not from your Uncle Bob. And so, when you are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit today, you can think of that seal as God's signature on your soul, in permanent ink. That signature says God loves you and will always be present to you, if you just let him into your hearts and be present to him in return.]

What does that mean for us this weekend? [And, for the rest of us?] Well, I don't know about you, but June seems to be a really, really busy month for most of us filled with all kinds of obligations due to the school year wrapping up, the fiscal year ending at work, there are graduations, weddings and anniversaries we want to attend, Father's Day is coming, and the list goes on. It is a really, really busy month and there are only so many hours in a day. And so, if we need to prioritize our "to-do" lists right now since we can't do everything, what would be the best way to go about it? I think the message of Trinity Sunday of Father, Son and Holy Spirit being eternally present to each other can give us an insight. I think the values of presence and attendance to God, family members, friendships, and attending to the poor and marginalized in our world should be at the top of the list. And if we want a deeper relationship with God, if we are seeking that right now, the good news is all we need to do is allow our hearts to be open and so to simply be present to him so he can be more fully present to us. We need to make time for that and prioritize God in life the same way God prioritizes us for the sake of our salvation.