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St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego
Homily for Trinity Sunday
May 30, 2010

All Glory To the Holy Trinity: Our Ground, Our Goal and Our Guide. Amen.

In today's very brief Gospel reading, from the scene of the Last Supper in St. John, Jesus says this tremendous thing to his disciples: "All that the Father has is mine.... and the Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you.".... And there they are again, the Trinity, just as they are all through John's Gospel, the three Persons within, or the three personifications of, the one eternal God: the FATHER, the SON (Jesus) and the HOLY SPIRIT. Just as a tri-angle is one angle with three internal corners (one in three and three in one), so this Tri-Unity (or Trinity) is one God with three internal Persons in a love relationship. Indeed, when we read in First John 4:8 that "God Is Love," the Trinity explains precisely how "God Is Love," for love is a relationship between persons and (as our Dean puts it so well) here we have the Father-the Lover, the Son-the Beloved, and the Holy Spirit-Love Itself (and I like to think of the Spirit as feminine, like God's "Lady Wisdom" in today's First Lesson). And this Christian vision or revelation of the Holy Trinity underlies and ties together absolutely everything we believe and celebrate, which is why I have always loved this day, Trinity Sunday!

It sums up the three great feasts of the Christian Year: on Christmas we celebrated the Gift of the Father (the Christ Child).... On Easter we celebrated the Victory of the Son (the Resurrection).... And last Sunday, on Pentecost, we celebrated the Coming of the Holy Spirit (the Birthday of the Church).... And today we see them all together, the works of the Triune God!

It sums up everything we will profess in the Nicene Creed in a few minutes: in the First Article, God the Father, our Creator.... in the Second Article, God the Son, Jesus

Christ, our Redeemer.... and in the Third Article, God the Holy Spirit, our Faith and Life Giver.

Indeed, it really sums up the whole Christian life because we are BAPTIZED “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;” through the water and the Word, God lovingly claims us and brands us with God’s own Triune Name; now we know who we are and whose we are, “the People of God,” that’s our identity and meaning and mission; now we belong to the Body of Christ, and our whole Christian life is learning to live and give this out in terms of what we do with what we have: our time, our talents and our treasure. Every time we make the Sign of the Cross and say that Three-fold Name – “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” – we are reminding ourselves and re-committing ourselves to use all we are and have for the God who gave it all to us. // And we need to think about this as we pray through our St. Paul’s “Time and Talent” pledge pamphlet: as people with God’s Name on us, how might we respond with all of God’s blessings between now and next Trinity Sunday?

Yes, we can see how enormous the message of the Holy Trinity and Trinity Sunday is, but I want to close today by bringing it all right down into the lives and questions of millions of people all around us who for all sorts of reasons don’t believe in it, and who may never have heard of it, but who are nevertheless dealing with its basic issues and challenges all the time because the Holy Trinity made them that way, even programmed them that way. As St. Augustine put it way back in the Fifth Century: “O God, You made our hearts to know You, and they shall find no rest until they rest in You.” Let me share with you how I deal with this in Religious Studies classes at the University of San Diego when we talk about the Trinity.... and keep in mind that these young adults are from all over the United States and from all around the world, bringing into class every conceivable religious or anti-religious point of view, and that we welcome everyone and their opinion exactly as they are, no matter what world-religion they were raised in or have now thrown over. So we’re all in class now, and it goes like this:

At one time or another, and to one degree or another, everyone in this classroom has been wondering about three things, three “existential questions.” Indeed, to be human is to wonder about them because the search for meaning is in our homo sapien DNA. We are “created in God’s image,” and this is what that means; only God truly fills these needs. I call them the “Triune Imperative” and they come at us like this:

First of all, we’ve been wondering about **WHAT WE ARE GOING TO STAND ON**; that is, what we’re going to stand for and stand with. We’re looking for some solid rock foundation on which we could build our values and priorities in this world, and some basis for our self-respect and self-esteem and, yes, love of ourselves. The world is trying to sell us all kinds of quicksand footing for our worth: sexual attractiveness, a big salary, that high-rise condo, that foreign car, those designer clothes.... but we know that a bad crash on the freeway, or a bad crash on the stock market, can kiss all that goodbye in one day. **WHAT ARE WE GOING TO STAND ON?**

Secondly, we’ve been wondering **WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GO**; that is, what will we be living for, what kind of people do we want to become and what do we hope to accomplish with others? The world holds up the ideal of the autonomous, self-centered EGO, with no commitments beyond convenience... no friends or family beyond impulse... no sacrificial caring to block one’s freedom or will to power... but we know where that can lead, too: to solitary confinement in the prison cell of the SELF! (Some wealthy people go crazy in there.) **WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GO?**

And, thirdly, if we know where we want to go – to a life of love and caring with others – **HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE**; that is, where do we find the strength and courage to move beyond what we’ve been and what we’ve known to that **TRULY HUMAN FUTURE**, what we were born for? **HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?** // And, Class, when the Christian faith invites us into the inner Love-Life of the Trinity through Holy Baptism... when it welcomes us exactly as we are, by

grace alone through faith alone (as St. Paul says in Roman 5)... then these are the very questions it is answering as we live out our Baptism for the rest of our days!

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO STAND ON? Right from our Baptism, all the way along we have God the Father as our **GROUND**, the very Ground of our Being, able to love ourselves and others because of His love for us, even when all other grounds have been swept away, strong in our **DIGNITY** as the Father's children.

AND WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GO? Right from our Baptism, all the way along we have God the Son, Jesus Christ, as our **GOAL**, as our glorious "Omega Point," and when the world tells us that all shall end in absurdity and oblivion, we are strong in our **DESTINY** as members of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

AND HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE? Right from our Baptism, all the way along we have God the Holy Spirit as our **GUIDE**, as the one who leads us toward our triumph in Christ, and when the world tells us that we are weak, that we have no more power or direction or purpose, then we are strong in our **DYNAMIC** as Spirit-led people, knowing His power (or HER power) in the Word and Sacraments.

Yes, that's how I explain the Trinity to a college class – that it's really all about what they are looking for – and while it may seem too "preachy" and "passionate" for a college classroom, still, I must say it holds all of those secular students riveted. // They are going out into a world of absolute uncertainty.... they are intensely interested in a possible Word of Hope.... and that tells me it's time for God's Good News!

May the Father, Son and Holy Spirit enfold and uphold all of them, and all of us, in God's eternal Triune Love, and may we be God's grounded and goal-focused and Spirit-guided people through all that is to come.

A JOYOUS TRINITY SUNDAY TO YOU ALL!