

Solemnity of the Holy Trinity June 4, 2023

**“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn
the world, . . .”**

My observation tells me that ‘mercy’ seems to be kind of in short supply these days. At least that’s the way it appears to me. And maybe this isn’t a “new” thing at all. Maybe it’s always been that way, and maybe that’s because it might be one of the most difficult things we can ever be expected to be, to be merciful. And unlike many other positive attributes (generosity or honesty, for example), mercy doesn’t seem to be something many of us try to “fake”. In fact, many of us see it as a kind of liability, a kind of weakness, and so we do what we can to make sure people don’t think we are that way. Maybe you disagree, and that’s okay. However, I can only tell you what I know from my own experience, specifically what I hear from others when certain situations arise (and conversely what I DON’T often hear).

What I often hear are things like:

I hope that guy gets what’s coming to him.

I’m never going to forgive my friend for what she said to me.

People don’t change. That’s just a big lie.

That person didn’t come to my birthday party so there’s no way I’m going to hers.

If someone harmed a loved one of mine, I’d kill him.

You don’t deserve a second chance.

She’s only apologizing because she got caught. She doesn’t mean it.

I’d do away with parole completely. Once a crook, always a crook.

What I almost NEVER hear are things like:

He’s just a kid. We shouldn’t let this ruin his whole life.

I accept your apology, and I forgive you - really.

People make mistakes, and those mistakes don’t erase the good they’ve done.

I’m not interested in getting back at people.

Just because he was that way long ago doesn’t mean he’s that same person now. People can change.

She needs a second chance, not handcuffs.

I’m not perfect, so I can’t expect others to be.

The truth is that it’s hard for us to want to extend mercy to others, hard for us to want to be kind and loving and forgiving when our knee-jerk reaction is to feel otherwise. Of course, that

doesn't apply to ourselves. It never does. When it comes to OUR faults and failings we want others to be merciful to us. But the other way around? Not so much.

Today, we gather on this holy day, the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, a day on which we reflect on and give thanks for the incredible God we have, a God who truly is beyond all understanding. Yet, we try to understand nonetheless, we try to get a glimpse into our wonderful God, try our best to "explain" the "inexplicable". Of course, none of that would even be possible if our God didn't want it to be possible, wouldn't be possible if God wasn't continually revealing himself to us - allowing us a peek into the deepest of mysteries.

And at the heart of the Trinity is the idea of "relationship". And not just any kind of relationship, a LOVING relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit. Love is at the heart of who God is. And the love that lies at the heart of who God is, is not hoarded and clung to by our God, not kept in a tight embrace.

It is rather poured out for us. Not once a while, but continuously. This is who we believe God to be and "know" God to be (through his self-revelation, most perfectly made known in Jesus). This God is Father - the one who created all things out of love and saw that all he had made was good. Yes, that means you and me. This Father of ours holds all of creation in the palm of his hand, gently sustaining us and every other created thing. And the Prophet Isaiah tells us that this God of ours knows and calls each of us by name.

This God is also Son - the one who became like us in order to save us, to redeem us, and to show us what true love looks like. And this God is also Spirit - our God who is not watching us from a distance, but who is alive and well and at work in every human heart open to him.

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, . . ."

So if this is the nature of our God, why do we have such a hard time embracing the very things of God? The answer to that question is not a simple one, and I can't answer it for you. Each of us has our own reasons as to why we fall short of being the person God wants us to be. But when we reflect on the Trinity, when we look at the life of Jesus, it becomes abundantly clear that:

God is not looking for reasons to punish us.

God is not looking for an opportunity to "give us what we deserve".

God is not looking for a way to "teach us a hard lesson" or "make sure we know who's boss" or cause us to worry unnecessarily or fear his wrath every second of every day.

No, our triune God constantly looks for opportunities to show us mercy, opportunities to forgive us, opportunities to be generous to us, opportunities to simply love you and me. That's our

incredible God. That's who God is. And that should make us wonder - who are we? And more importantly, who do we want to be?

Let's look to the Trinity to answer that question.

Short Story

The story is told of St Augustine of Hippo, a great philosopher and theologian who wanted so much to understand the doctrine of the Trinity and to be able to explain it logically. One day as he was walking along the sea shore and reflecting on this, he suddenly saw a little child all alone on the shore. The child made a hole in the sand, ran to the sea with a little cup, filled her cup, came and poured it into the hole she had made in the sand. Back and forth she went to the sea, filled her cup and came and poured it into the hole. Augustine went up to her and said, "Little child, what are doing?" and she replied, "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole." "How do you think," Augustine asked her, "that you can empty this immense sea into this tiny hole and with this tiny cup?" To which she replied, " And you, how do you suppose that with this your small head you can comprehend the immensity of God?" With that the child disappeared.

Father Boat