

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

May 26, 2024

♪♪♪ Praise the Holy Trinity, undivided unity

An oldie, but a goodie. I'm pretty sure it will be "stuck" in my head for the rest of the day. Many parishes only bring out this song a few times a year, maybe even just once on this day the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. And maybe, because we have just one Sunday set aside each year to reflect on and celebrate this great mystery, we might consider this teaching to be simply one more "teaching" in a whole catalog of "teachings", one more element of faith among many others.

Yet, it is not that at all. Rather it is the pillar upon which so many other elements of faith rest, the anchor that secures so much of what we believe about life, about God, and even about ourselves. And yet, this "pillar" wasn't always one, wasn't always evident to those believers who paved the way for the faith we embrace today.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The "Father" part was almost certainly the easiest for those first disciples to "understand" at some level. After all, the Jewish community that gave rise to those first Christians believed in a God who reflected those same sorts of attributes of God the Father that we still hold dear today. God as Almighty. God as Just. God as Judge. God as Lawgiver. God as Mercy. God as Lord. God as Wisdom. God as Partner in a Covenant. In many ways, the God the Father we believe in is all of those things.

But as the early Church reflected on the teachings of Jesus, reflected on his miracles, and most importantly, reflected on his death and resurrection, they began to understand Jesus in a much deeper way. Was he God? Was he not? If he was God, what would that mean? And does that mean there is more than one God?

This was truly not easy for the early Church to wrap its mind around. This was puzzling stuff. And when they began reflecting on the Spirit (who had infused their hearts and minds) they realized that their understanding would need to change, that this God of the Christians was (in a very real sense) beyond anything they could imagine, was something that almost defied explanation.

Yet, explain was exactly what they would need to do. You see, it's one thing to "think" about something, have something in one's mind. But for others to come to that same faith, others to have that same understanding, others to embrace that same mystery, words would need to be used. And so the Church (over centuries) wrestled with trying to find the best ways to describe the indescribable, explain the inexplicable. The truth is, God is so much more, infinitely more, than any words can describe, yet words would need to be used nonetheless.

And so we, in this time and place, have the benefit of having centuries of Church teaching on the Trinity, countless expressions of faith that help us enter more deeply into a mystery that is beyond anything we can imagine. And this teaching isn't something just "made up" out of thin air. It's something we believe has been revealed to us by God, something we could never have come to on our own. God being at work in hearts and minds of the Church (guiding and illuminating) is the premise upon which all our Church's teachings rest. Believing that God works that way takes real faith.

It's important to remember, however, that whatever we (as Church) say about God in faith of course, is always limited, always falls short of what it seeks to do, that is, provide us with a window into who God is. Yet, that doesn't mean that there isn't truth in what the Church says about God. It just means that it can't never be the whole or final story. With God there is always more. And at the core of the Church's teaching are the words I began this homily with

. undivided unity.

Sometimes, when we've heard something enough, heard something countless times, we sort of stop thinking about it, stop truly listening to what is being said, stop wondering what something might actually mean. And the Holy Trinity is no different. Undivided unity. Think about it. Undivided unity. Why is knowing this and believing this important? Is it just so we can "say" the words? Is it just so we can have some kind of "idea" about God, have something we can "say" if we ever have to "explain" it to someone else?

Or is it more?

Of course it's more. Everything about God is. But in this case the "more" is actually not about God. It's actually about you and me. You see, believing that God is somehow an undivided community (bound by love) means that we are meant to reflect a kind of undivided unity too, that we the human family are meant to live as a reflection of that deepest of realities.

Isn't that what a life of faith is all about? Isn't that why we seek to live lives in imitation of Jesus? Isn't striving to live in such a way that we make visible the divine image in which we were created the whole point?

In other words, didn't God become like us so we can become like him? And if that's the case, then we have a long way to go. And we don't have to start at the level of the entire world. We only have to look at our own Catholic community to realize that "undivided unity" is for the most part, unrealized.

Maybe it's because we think "unity" means "uniformity". Maybe we think that we all have to think exactly the same about everything, or all pray exactly the same way, or all vote the same way, or all hold the exact same things dear. But we don't. We're not some kind of exclusive country club.

We are a living, breathing thing called Church, imperfect men and women at all different places on the journey, coming from all different backgrounds and experiences, with all different gifts and all different weaknesses. Yet all sinners. All in need of love and mercy and compassion. All in need of forgiveness. All in need of the things that only God can give. All in need of a Savior.

So let's stop fighting with each other. Let's stop judging one another. Let's stop thinking that we all need to be carbon copies of each other. And absolutely, let's stop trying to figure out who are the most faithful.

My dear friends we're all "unfaithful". If we weren't we wouldn't need Jesus, wouldn't need the grace his death and resurrection provide, wouldn't need a God who loves us more than we can imagine, wouldn't need to be sitting in these pews.

Undivided unity. Let's make sure we don't simply apply those words to God. Rather, let's strive to make them reflected in us too.