

Trinity Sunday 2024

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Revelation 4.1-11 St John 3.1-15



All sermons at Saint Joseph Parish begin with these familiar words, “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matthew records the command Jesus gave to his disciples after his Resurrection, “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere, and make them my disciples: baptize them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always until the end of the age.”

Trinity Sunday is the Octave Day of Pentecost. Many priests don’t like to preach on Trinity Sunday because they feel compelled to explain the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity...that God exists as Three Persons...One God...Father, Son and Holy Spirit...as if it was a riddle to be solved. But the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity isn’t a riddle to be solved. In churches using more modern liturgies, today is celebrated as the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. The emphasis is on the Holy Trinity rather than trying to explain a Doctrine that ultimately can’t be explained.

In a sermon several years ago I quoted the fifth century theologian and Doctor of the Church, Saint Augustine of Hippo, who described the Trinity this way: “The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and the love that flows between them is so perfect it is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit”. After Mass a parishioner came up to me and said, “Well, Father, that’s all very good, but it doesn’t help me understand the Trinity any better.” Point taken!

The great English writer Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957), best known for her Lord Peter Wimsey crime novels, had this to say about the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, “The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Spirit incomprehensible, the whole thing incomprehensible. Something put in by theologians to make it more difficult-nothing to do with daily life and ethics”.

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity states God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit...Three Persons...One God. We can accept this as defining a love relationship between the Three Persons of the Trinity, but we will not

fully understand the dynamics of that relationship until we get to heaven. That’s why we call it the Mystery of the Holy Trinity.

We shouldn’t try to figure out the HOW of the Holy Trinity. We do want to experience the WHO of the Holy Trinity. We believe the Father has revealed himself to us through his Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth and increases our faith every day. This should be our focus on Trinity Sunday and throughout the Trinity Season. In fact, every Sunday and every Mass celebrated throughout the World is a festival of the Holy Trinity.

We get an idea of the importance of the Holy Trinity in our own lives by how we experience the Holy Trinity in the Liturgical life of the Parish. The Name of the Holy Trinity is invoked in every service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Our life in the Church began when we were baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and received into “the congregation of Christ’s flock.” The priest lays his hand on a person for healing and does so in the Name of the Trinity.

We read the Last Gospel at every Sunday Mass because it teaches us God has always existed as Trinity. John writes, “The Word (Jesus) became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory (light), the glory (light) which he received as the Father’s only Son.” We are only able to see the glory (light) that is Jesus because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Our love relationship with the Holy Trinity doesn’t end when we die. In the Concluding Rite at the end of a Requiem Mass, we pray that the dead person who was “sealed with the sign of the Trinity” while he was alive, will have everlasting rest and be welcomed into heaven by the Angels and Saints. This morning’s Lesson from Revelation is John’s vision of what heaven will be like.

The long Trinity Season this year is a time for spiritual growth and maturity. Our faith teaches us God the Father loves Jesus...Jesus loves the Father. Because Jesus loves us, the Father loves us too. And the Holy Spirit helps us to know that love more perfectly every day of our lives.

