

### **Homily for Trinity Sunday 2016**

Today is the Feast of the Blessed Trinity. Back in the tenth century Pope John XII positioned this Feast Day to follow on the last of the Great Mysteries of our Salvation, the Feast of Pentecost. The doctrine the Trinity is to our Faith what a Foundation is to a building. Everything else arises from this Doctrine: As the Catechism puts it:

*The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life.<sup>1</sup>*

So today we are going to ponder the Doctrine of the Trinity by thinking about who God is and what God does. The Church Fathers talked about who God is by employing the technical term “theologia”. They then used the word “oikonimia” in reference to what God does.

From the word theologia is derived the English word Theology. “Theos” means God and “logy” is a form of the word “logos” which means word. Theology is therefore the Language of God that helps us to articulate with words what God has shown us to be most essential to who he is, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is because the “Logos” took on flesh in Jesus Christ and because the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, that we have the vocabulary to say that in His essence God is Trinitarian.

The word “oikonimia” is the basis of our English word “economy”. “Oikos” in Greek means house. “Nomos”, in the Greek, means “to manage”. Therefore oikonimia, or “economy”, means “household management” So when the Church Fathers speak of theologia they are talking about who God is. When they speak of “oikonimia” they are talking about how this God manages his household.

#### **The Theology of the Trinity:**

Tertullian, who died in 240, was the first theologian to use the term Trinity. He explained the Trinity with a metaphor. God the Father he described as "the deep root, the Son as the shoot that breaks forth into the world, and the Holy Spirit as He who spreads beauty and fragrance."

I like that. It helps us to appreciate how from the Father comes forth the Son who together emanate the fragrance of Holy Love who is the Holy Spirit.

Although this metaphor helps us, it does not go far enough. God is pure spirit, and all our earthly analogies fall far short of describing Him as He really is.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (Kindle Locations 986-987). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Kindle Edition.

This is why the Church in the Nicene Creed, which would not to be finally ratified until 451, does not employ metaphorical but theological language in professing Trinitarian faith.

Theology is the way we approach God on His terms rather than our own. Thus, though there's no easy way of going about it, we can't go deep in our faith unless we're willing to take on the task of theology to some degree. The ultimate truth about God cannot be dependent on anything other than God.

In Jesus Christ God has revealed to us His eternal identity because he has told us His name. At the end of Saint Matthew's gospel (28: 19), Jesus commands His disciples to baptize "in the name" of the Blessed Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Notice that He does not speak of these as three titles, but as a single name. In the culture of ancient Israel, one's name was equivalent to one's identity. This single name, then, reveals Who God is from all eternity. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

St. Pope John Paul II wrote what the implication of God's name means in this way:

***“God in His deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since He has in Himself fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love.”***

Did you catch that? God, then, is not like a family; God is a family. From eternity, God alone possesses the essential attributes of a family, and the Trinity alone possesses them in their perfection. Earthly households have these attributes, but imperfectly.

Because the familial character of the Trinity reveals the deepest dimension of Who God is, it also reveals the deepest meaning of what God does. As I said at the outset the mystery of the Trinity is “the central mystery of Christian faith and life.” This is because it is the mystery of God in Himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them.

Thus, our understanding of God as family should also profoundly affect our understanding of all His works. In everything that exists, we may discern— with the eyes of faith— a familial purpose, what the theological tradition calls “the footprints of the Trinity.” Or what I referred to before as God's economy, how he manages the household.

### **The Economy of the Trinity**

Vatican II drew a parallel between the interpersonal relationship that exists between the Persons of the Trinity and married life in this way:

***Authentic married love is caught up into divine love***

The Lord Jesus makes it clear that from creation God made humans male and female because together they represent the image of God. Nowhere does this find greater clarity than is the sacrament of Catholic Marriage.

Think about it this way. A husband and wife who in the covenant promise of marriage and in the marital embrace, that is conjugal love, which is the deepest physical expression of that love, become one flesh. This is what the Church speaks about as the unitive dimension of marriage. Out of this unitive dimension, the procreative dimension of marriage becomes real as children are born.

Just as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the love existing between the Father and the Son, so too the fruit of marital love proceeds from husband and wife who in a total gift of the self to the other then have offspring made in their image.

When we can see the correlation between the Trinity and Marriage then we can see that when spouses join their lives together they assume an active and creative role in a lifelong project that is a true expression of Trinitarian love. This is the clearest expression of how God's manages his household. Two people, who in the unity of marriage, complimenting each other give tangible expression to that love through their offspring.

But for the household work of God to find sacramental expression in marriage, husband and wife must set aside all illusions and accept the other as he or she actually is: an unfinished person needing to grow, a work in progress.

Pope Francis wrote about this with pastoral care when in *Amoris Laetitia: On Love in the Family*. He counselled Catholic couples:

***For those who are married, the greatest mission of two people in love is to help one another become, respectively, more a man and more a woman. Fostering growth means helping a person to shape his or her own identity. Love is thus a kind of craftsmanship. In the life of married couples, even at difficult moments, one person can always surprise the other, and new doors can open for their relationship, as if they were meeting for the first time. At every new stage, they can keep "forming" one another. Love makes each wait for the other with the patience of a craftsman, a patience which comes from God.***

When the foundation of marriage is rooted in the foundation of the Trinity and together the couple are regularly partaking of the sacraments especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation then the very character of Trinitarian love will be reflected in the life of the couple. For here as one flesh, two distinct persons whose joint lives give birth to those made in their image show that their household management is shaped and governed by the Blessed and most Holy Trinity, who when described theologically is

***In His deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since He has in Himself fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love."***

May our theology of the Trinity inspire us to allow his economy to continually transform our homes to ever more reflect the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.