

“The Fact of the Trinity Guides our Faith”

Homily for Trinity Sunday

May 27th, 2018

There is a Chinese parable that goes as follows: Fact, Faith, and Feeling are three men walking along the top of a wall. As long as Faith keeps his eyes on Fact, ahead of him, all three keep walking. But when Faith takes his eyes off Fact and turns around to worry about how Feeling is doing, both Faith and Feeling fall off the wall.

On this Trinity Sunday I want to use this parable to help us better understand what a wonderful gift it is for us to know that the most important fact of all is that God is Trinitarian. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

*The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life.*¹

There is no fact more important than this one. The faith of all Christians rests on this one fact of who God is, One in Substance and Three in Persons. The doctrine of the Trinity is the primary doctrine of Christianity in that it reveals the ultimate truth and the nature of ultimate reality because it is about God. The Church’s understanding of the Trinity does not define God, but it truly reveals God. Other mysteries of our faith tell us what God has done in time (the creation, the Incarnation, the Resurrection), but the Trinity tells us who God is in eternity.²

Let’s think about the Trinity this way. All around us we live in a world of communication and image making. Think of something as simple as a rock lying in a garden. If after a heavy rain, you lifted this rock what would you find? An imperfect but real image of the rock in the soil? When a plant drops its seeds, what results? Other plants, that are an exact image of the seminating plant. Let’s take it one step further. A man and woman fall in love and through a relationship of courtship they communicate with each other, get to know each other better. They then marry and in the deepest form of intimate communication they bond and are open to life. At times, they will then conceive, with the resulting image of the parents in a boy or girl.

Now think about this in relation to the highest form of communication that exists in the Trinity. The Father can form a perfect image of Himself, this interior word, the Son. The Father can produce an image that is a perfect reproduction of his own being, in mind, will, personality, freedom, power, love and simplicity. We say in the Creed that the Son is “God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God.” The Son is the perfect image of the Father. We say that Jesus is Consubstantial with the Father. That is, one in Being.

¹ Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed., p. 62). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

² Kreeft, Peter (2011-03-04). *Catholic Christianity* (pp. 39-40). Ignatius Press. Kindle Edition.

Now from all eternity the Son looks at the Father and the Father looks at the Son. What do they see? Each sees the utter perfection of the other, their beauty, goodness and truth. And so, they necessarily fall in love with each other. To use Venerable Fulton Sheen's beautiful phrase, they "sigh" their love for each other. That Holy breath we call the *Spiritus Sanctus*, the Holy Spirit. God is a family of image making and communication. All of creation reflects and is a mirror of this white intensity of the Divine Love.

So how do we live in such a way that we can keep the eyes of Faith focused on the fact of Trinitarian God not be distracted by those obtrusive and needy feelings? The readings give us wise council on how we can concentrate more on God's Character and so be less distracted by our own distorted characters.

- Deuteronomy says we do this by remembering.
- Romans says we do this through relationship.
- Matthew says we do this by realizing.

Let me now develop this some more. As we remember who God is – the theme of Deuteronomy, we can know that we are to be in relationship with him - the theme of Romans, so that we can realize our mission in life – the theme of Matthew.

In Deuteronomy Moses wants the people to remember that God is the one who took the initiative with Israel. God is always the one who takes the initiative. This is because he is first and foremost our Father. Paternity has to always precede offspring. There can only be offspring because in love through the marital embrace, a husband impregnates his wife and the new life results.

We are to remember that God takes this initiative to give us spiritual birth out of love for us. This is why he spoke to Israel through Moses. He wanted to create a people who would know him for who He is and in remembering who He is they would know who they are. Our text puts it this way:

So, acknowledge today and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. ⁴⁰ Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.³

In Deuteronomy the remembering of God's character is expressed in the moral law he gave us which reflects his own nature. This is why Deuteronomy says we are to keep his statutes and his commandments. For the essential principles of morality for humankind are absolute and unchangeable: because they "go all the way up" into the nature of God, and we are made in the image of this God. When Faith is looking to Fact and not to Feeling we can more fully keep God's statutes and commandments because it is our will and not our feelings directing our lives.

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Dt 4:39–40). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

This leads us to the second theme of relationship.

This remembering of God is not an end in itself. Rather it is so that we can be in relationship with him. This is what Paul means when he says that “God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But there is an act of our own will required here. We are to cry “Abba Father”. We need to recognize the centrality of this relationship for our lives.

A relationship based on Faith in God is necessary for salvation because of what faith is and what salvation is: If we let God into our souls (that is what faith is), then we will have God guide our souls (that is what salvation is). If we do not, we will not. (For God respects our free will.)

Faith is like opening a faucet. If you do not open the faucet of faith, you will not receive the water of salvation. There is simply nothing that makes a greater difference than faith. For through faith in God we call him Father and so build a relationship with him.⁴

As we remember who God is and know that we are made for relationship with Him then we realize that we are to join God in making him known to others. For there are many today who are always paying so much attention to their feelings as the dominant influence in their lives. We have a wonderful truth, a most glorious Fact to share with our friends, and family. It is that God has revealed himself to us and he wants to use us to help others to come to know the grace and blessings of saying God is one in substance as he reveals the richness of his love to us as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Matthew’s Gospel ends with Jesus declaring the Great Commission.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,⁵

Our lives in the present are to be given over to concentrating on the most Blessed Trinity. One day we will do this in such a way that we will see God. For now we are given the gift of Faith. A faith that remembers that we are to be in relationship with God so in turn realize we are to share this faith with others. In so doing we will fall less often because feelings will follow faith because faith is following the most Glorious and Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

⁴ Kreeft, Peter (2011-03-04). Catholic Christianity (p. 24). Ignatius Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Mt 28:19). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.