

Trinity Sunday
May 29th and 30th 2021

Identity and Dignity

I love celebrating baptisms. One of the reasons is because the Liturgy is centred on the importance of names. The Name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the name of the person to be baptized. When we are baptizing infants or children before the age of seven, the parents are asked to name their child. Think about this. The naming of the child is the first loving act parents do when they welcome their little one into the world. One of our first questions when we hear of a birth, is to ask the child's name.

To have a name is to have an identity. Baptism is that sacrament where our identity is clearly expressed in this way. The minister uses the child's name and then declares:

“The Church of God receives you with great joy. In her name I sign you with the sign of the Cross of Christ our Saviour”.

What does this say about our identity? As we are named, we then name the Church as that fellowship which welcomes the child with great joy. The minister then signs them with the Cross as belonging to Christ our Saviour. To be signed with the Cross affirms for us that our life is now joined to the life of Jesus, we are marked as his. As our identity and name are joined to him, this also affirms our dignity.

In the Baptismal Liturgy our dignity is expressed this way, as the minister prays over the child:

***Almighty ever living God,
Who sent your Son into the world,
To drive out from us the power of Satan, the spirit of evil
And bring the human race, rescued from darkness
into the marvellous kingdom of your light.***

This prayer expresses how the Christian comes to receive our inherent dignity. We name first Jesus' action whereby he came to free us from the power of Satan and transfers us from the darkness of his realm into the marvelous light of the Kingdom of Jesus.

The prayer then goes on to directly address the child to be baptized:

***We humbly beseech you to free this child from Original Sin
and make him or her a temple of your glory
and grant that your Holy Spirit, may dwell in him or her.***

This expresses our Christian dignity. We are temples of God's glory made for the Holy Spirit so that he may dwell within us.

To discover our Christian identity and dignity declared in our baptism takes a lifetime to understand and live out. That is why Jesus in today's Gospel commissions the Apostles to not only baptize in the name of the Trinity but then exhorts these early disciples to teach those baptized to obey all that he has commanded.

What does this mean? To obey means to listen in such a way that the words we are hearing are so touching our lives that they are resulting in our deepening conversion. As we discover the full meaning of our baptism, not only are we invited to realize who we are and the significance of our name, but in turn the Trinitarian God becomes ever more real to us.

Pope Emeritus Benedict talked about this work of deepening awareness as to our identity and dignity when in his Angelus Address on Trinity Sunday 2006 he said:

"Thanks to the Holy Spirit, who helps us understand Jesus' words and guides us to the whole truth (cf. Jn 14:26; 16:13), believers can experience, so to speak, the intimacy of God himself, discovering that he is not infinite solitude but communion of light and love, life given and received in an eternal dialogue between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit - Lover, Loved and Love, to echo St Augustine."

God the Father is the lover who so loves the Son that the Holy Spirit is the outpouring of that love on us so we can enter the intimacy of communion of light, life and love that is at the centre of the Trinitarian life. From that centre we come to more fully know you identity and dignity.

So how can we live this week, more aware that we are sons and daughters of God who marked as belonging to Jesus are discovering what it means to be temples of his glory? Take the time to ponder the beauty that surrounds us where creation itself is marked as a temple of God's glory. Flowering trees, bird song, life arising everywhere points to how creation itself declares to us what today's psalm stated:

***By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.
For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.***

In other words, all of God's creation is, in some sense, a revelation, just as the works of an artist are a window into his personality. In the wonders of nature God is whispering to our hearts, inviting us to admire his goodness and to fall in love with his beauty. The more we listen to those whispers, and the more often we accept that invitation, the wiser we become, the more God's love penetrates our yearning hearts.

So may we take time this week for balanced contact with the world around us:

- through healthy recreation,
- a family garden,
- family trips to the park,

- and maybe even a summer family pilgrimage to the Shrine Church in Canmore

This attentiveness to the world around us can help remind our hearts that they are loved by a God whose very essence is a dynamic relationship of love, and who is also our true and perfect Father. As this realization deepens within us, we will know more fully our identity as those belonging to Jesus as we invite the love of God the Holy Spirit infuse our lives with his life and affirm our dignity as temples of God's glory.