

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY – June 07, 2020

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A very blessed and happy Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity to you all. Today we celebrate that most marvelous doctrine of our Faith which teaches us that our God, who is One, exists as a Trinity, which is to say, He is One God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity is unique among the other Feasts and Solemnities that we celebrate throughout the year because, unlike these other celebrations, which celebrate *something that God has done*, today's Solemnity is celebrating *who God is* which makes it the most important Solemnity of all. We are here *today* to celebrate our God Himself: He who is One, and yet is not alone in Himself. Instead, He exists as a mysterious community of love which we call the Most Holy Trinity. So, let's consider today's Gospel reading together, and see what we can learn about the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

As we just heard, St. John the Evangelist records Jesus as saying, "God [the Father] so loved the world that he gave his only Son." So, the love of our Triune God is **self-sacrificial**. God the Father "gave his only Son," Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. Since God the Father and God the Son are both persons of the Blessed Trinity, this means that God did not send some other creature to take care of the mess that our sin created. Rather, God Himself came to us, as a man, as Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity. God mysteriously gave us Himself by laying down His own life on the Cross through the Person of His Son Jesus. This is a challenging mystery to say the least, but it is not hard to us to understand the most important part: the love of the Trinity is **self-sacrificial**.

Next, in this reading from John's Gospel account, Jesus tells us *why* God the Father gave His Son: "so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life... that the world might be saved through him." ***It is astonishing that God the Father would respond to our sin by sending His Son to save us.*** From our human perspective, it would have made more sense if God the Father had sent His Son with a legion of angels to punish and destroy humanity because of our sinfulness. That is what we deserved because of our behavior. But, He didn't. Instead, God the Father sent His Son to save us. Therefore, the love of our Triune God is also **unconditional**. "While we were still sinners," St. Paul tells us, "Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). And still today, despite the fact that we all continue to struggle with sin, God

continues to love us and save us, and He always will as long as we are willing to accept His love by believing in Jesus.

So, just from this short passage, we can learn that the Most Holy Trinity loves us and that love is *self-sacrificial* and *unconditional*.

Perhaps a section here on what “believing in Jesus” means? Believing in our hearts and confessing with our lips. Faith and works. How our Protestant brothers and sisters emphasize one over the other instead of both.

Now, at the end of today’s Gospel reading, after telling us about the Trinity’s self-sacrificial and unconditional love, Jesus tells us what will happen if we choose to refuse God’s offer of love by not believing in Him. He says, “Whoever believes in [Jesus] will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe *has already been condemned*, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

“Whoever does not believe *has already been condemned*.” It is important to note what Jesus is *not* saying here. He is *not* saying that “**God will condemn**” those who do not believe in Jesus. Instead, He is saying that those who do not believe in Jesus, are condemned by their own choice, *by the fact that they choose to not believe in Jesus* up until the last moment of their lives.

You see, God does not condemn anyone. He does not use His power to impose condemnation upon human beings when we reject Him. Instead, condemnation is simply what happens when we choose to separate ourselves from the saving love of God. Condemnation is actually the absence of God, and it breaks God’s heart whenever someone refuses His love and brings condemnation upon him or herself. St. Paul tells us in his first letter to St. Timothy that God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” but He will not force us to believe in Jesus. If we insist, He will allow us to reject His love and suffer the natural consequences that follow from being separated from Him.

“Whoever does not believe has already been condemned.” These are words that should fill us with a Holy fear of God because Hell is real, and that we can end up there if ever we were to reject God up until the last moment of our life on Earth. Some Christians will say that God is too loving to ever allow us to condemn ourselves to Hell. However, the reality is that God is *too loving* to force us to go to Heaven if we do not want to. He has given us the freedom to choose

between salvation or condemnation, and such freedom means that it is indeed possible for us to choose to condemn ourselves. This is why Jesus warns us saying, “Whoever does not believe has already been condemned.”

In conclusion, considering on one hand, the awesome, self-sacrificial and unconditional love of the Trinity, and, on the other hand, our Lord’s warning that “whoever does not believe has already been condemned,” the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity should inspire us to 1) dive deeper into our own personal relationship with God, and then 2) share our love for God with others so that all people might be saved.

First of all, the amazing love of our Triune God is just too good for us to miss out on. We should always desire more of the self-sacrificial and unconditional love of the Most Blessed Trinity. We can always surrender more of ourselves to God, and so it is always possible for us to enjoy more of His love.

Secondly, the amazing love of our Triune God is just too good for *others* to miss out on. In fact, as we know from the Gospel reading, God’s love is *necessary* for salvation. To reject His love, is to condemn ourselves and so, for us as Catholic Christians who are blessed to be enjoying the fullness of the Truth and who even have the opportunity to receive the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus as often as we come to Mass, it is imperative that we share this Good News with others.

Of course, there are many ways to dive deeper into our relationship with God and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. I will highlight just one. Read Scripture, every day, together as a family if at all possible. If you are already doing this, wonderful. Bring Father and I some questions. Even after 6 years of seminary, I still don’t understand half of what I read in the Bible, so I know that you all must have some good questions. Bring them to Father and I. We love talking about the Bible with other people because the more that we understand about the Bible, the more we will be able to love God and share our love and understanding of God with others.

Now, if you are looking for a little help in your study of the Bible, and if you are comfortable meeting with others during the pandemic, we are starting a Bible study that will be offered here in Thomas, in the Parish Hall, on Tuesday evenings after the 5:00 PM Mass, and in

Parsons, in the Parish Hall there, on Wednesday mornings after the 9:00 AM Mass. And, if neither of these times will work for you, and/or if you would be comfortable with having a visitor at your home, I am willing to come to you, to bless your homes, and then to have a family Bible study with you right in your own living room. Let me know after Mass if you want to be a part of any of this or contact the parish office. I am going to be here all summer, I am really looking forward to doing everything that I can to help the good people of Thomas and Parsons to dive deeper in their relationship with God and to find the courage to share their faith with others so that, one day, Lord willing, we can all spend eternity in Heaven, united to the perfect love of the Most Blessed Trinity.

It is more important than ever for us, as Catholics in the United States, to remind our family, our friends, and our communities that God the Father reacted to our senseless violence against Him by saving us through the blood of His Son on the Cross, and bestowing His Holy Spirit upon us so that we would be able to, in return, respond with love when we ourselves suffer from the senseless violence of others. Truly, the only way that we can bring an end to racism and all of the problems of the world, is to believe firmly in the saving Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Then, we must live our lives in a way that reflects our belief in Jesus. We must receive the Sacraments as often as we are able, especially the Most Holy Eucharist which renews the grace of the Holy Trinity within us every time that we receive it worthily. Also, we must strive to learn as much about our Lord Jesus so that we can love Him more. Some of you are aware that I will be offering a Summer Bible Study both here and in Parsons/Thomas, but what has not been revealed until now is that this Bible Study will be focused entirely on our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I invite all of you to come either to Thomas on Tuesdays after the 5:00 PM Mass, or to Parsons on Wednesdays after the 9:00 AM Mass to join us as we try to strengthen our belief in Jesus so that we can share more deeply in God's love and then share it with others in hopes that we might be able to save some souls from condemning themselves to Hell.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the Gospel reading for today is most appropriate for our celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. We are told about how amazing the love of the Trinity is for us, and we are offered a fair warning that can inspire us to deepen our belief

in Jesus and to share it with others so that, Lord willing, we will be welcomed into Heaven at the end of our lives where we will spend eternity united to the perfect love of the Trinity.

As we continue our preparation to receive the Sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood, by which the love of the Trinity is renewed within us, let us carefully reflect upon our belief in the Trinity in the Creed that we are about to profess.

- It's hard to love your enemy, but this is God's call because
 - They are already suffering enough punishment by their action
 - Our love is the only thing that can bring about change in them and the world
- Hateful response to our enemy can only be from the Devil
 - The violent Floyd riots are diabolical without a doubt, even the brother of the man killed is outraged at this behavior.

George Floyd's brother Terrence said, "If I'm not over here wildin' out, if I'm not over here blowing stuff up, if I'm not over here messin' up my community, then what are y'all doing? Y'all doin' nothing, because that's not going to bring my brother back at all. It may feel good for the moment, just like when you drink, but when it come down, you're gonna wonder what you did. My family is a peaceful family. My family is a God-fearing family." "My brother would not want you to be doing this" He advocates for peaceful protest and informed voting.

Even Mr. Floyd's brother, Terrence spoke out against the diabolic behavior that has been sweeping the nation. He said, "If I'm not over here wildin' out, if I'm not over here blowing stuff up, if I'm not over here messin' up my community, then what are y'all doing? Y'all doin' nothing, because that's not going to bring my brother back at all. It may feel good for the moment, just like when you drink, but when it come down, you're gonna wonder what you did. My family is a peaceful family. My family is a God-fearing family." "My brother would not want you to be doing this" Instead, Terrence advocated for peaceful protesting and informed voting.

One of Botham Jean's brothers, Brant Jean, said, "I hope that you go to God with all the guilt, all of the bad things that you may have done in the past... if you truly are sorry, I forgive you and I know that if you go to God and ask Him, he will forgive you... I love you just like anyone else... I want the best for you because I know that that's exactly what Botham would want you to do, and the best would be to give your life to Christ... I think giving your life to Christ would be the best thing that Botham would want you to do. Again, I love you as a person, and I don't wish anything bad on you.

Now, St. John does not mean to simply scare us with this line. inspire us to evangelize. They should put the fear of God in us if we do not truly believe in Jesus, because we may be slowly condemning ourselves by living a life that separates us from God's love. However, if we do truly believe in Jesus, then they should inspire us to share our belief in Jesus with everyone around us. If you sense that you might be a part of that first group because you have sinned seriously and have not confessed those sins to Fr. Grassi or to another Catholic priest, then don't wait anymore. Catch Father after Mass, or go to see another priest if you are not comfortable confessing to Fr. Grassi because he is your pastor. Don't separate yourself any longer from the unconditional and self-sacrificial love of the Blessed Trinity. The only thing that we can do that will separate us from God's love is to freely choose to reject His love. No sin is too great for Him to forgive. And this goes for all of us, because we all sin and fall short. Never hesitate to make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation when you have sinned. God is always ready to welcome us back as soon as we are willing to let His love back into our lives. We all have family members, friends, and other people in our lives who do not know Jesus, or who know of Jesus and still deny His love and choose to separate themselves from Him. Sure, it is easy to say things like, "God is love, and so He will not send him or her to go to Hell," and you're right in a sense. God will not *send* anyone to Hell, but He will allow them to send themselves to Hell by persisting in their rejection of His love.

We need to move a little beyond today's Gospel reading to ask the question, "how does the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity affect our lives today? Well, we know from later in John's Gospel that, in response to this amazing gift of love, God asks us to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34). We are called to love others with the same unconditional and self-sacrificial love of our Triune God. For example, this is why Jesus taught His disciples to love their enemies and to pray for those who were persecuting them (Mt 5: 43-44). We are called to love others unconditionally.

Ask yourselves this question, "Am I loving those who hate me or seek to harm me?" There are many in our world who are not following Jesus' example in this area. I think of some of the recent responses to the death of George Floyd...

Insert stuff about real life cases of forgiveness and love in the face of evil.

So many people choose to respond to evil with more evil. Violence is answered with more violence, hate with more hate, abuse with more abuse. So many follow the old eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth law that was superseded by the love of Christ!

We don't need to hate the people who harm us in this life. Evil is its own punishment. As we heard in today's Gospel reading, "whoever does not believe [in Jesus]..." whoever does not live as Jesus has told us and shown us, that person, "has already been condemned..." because to reject Jesus is to reject God, and there is no worse condemnation that a person can bring upon him or herself, than to turn away from God, the only one who has the power to save. To refuse to believe in God who is love, is to cut yourself off from love itself.

Will you respond to evil with love as our God does? Or will you follow the way of the world that answers evil with evil.

As we prepare to receive God, in the most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, let us consider anew what we believe about our Triune God, and our willingness to love others as He loved us, as we pronounce the words of the Creed...