

Homily First Sunday after Pentecost 5/27/18

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Let us begin this morning by honoring in silent prayer those who have served or are serving in our military. Let us pray for those who have died, those who have returned with physical or mental injuries and those fortunate enough to have come home healthy and able to resume a full life.

Today is Trinity Sunday. Let us take a brief look at what we know or maybe do not know about the Trinity. THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT (GHOST)

If asked to give a chronology of the appearance of the Trinity in the Bible most would probably answer the Father, the Son, and then the Holy Spirit. But if one studies the Old Testament you will find the Spirit mentioned in nearly every book from Genesis to Zachariah.

Genesis 1: 2 “and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”

Exodus 31:3 “I have filled him with the Spirit of God”

Joel 2:28 “I will pour out my Spirit on all people”

Zachariah 4:6 “but by my Spirit says the Lord”

Is the Spirit of God separate from God? Maybe the order is actually God, Spirit and Son. Regardless of the order let us ask “Just who are the three of the Trinity?”

God, the Father and Creator of all. God, have you actually ever seen a picture of God? Is God a “Him” We refer to God as the Father and that certainly implies a male. But I have never seen a picture of God. Phil Hovey tells me that a few icons (abstract pictures) do exist of God primarily in Eastern Orthodox churches. Some religions think of God as a mother/father figure.

In our own liturgy we have replaced “Him or He” with God, even though the prayer book still says “Him or He”

Have you read the book “The Shack”? God is represented as like “Aunt Jemima”. An Afro-American grandmother like figure.

But God seems to be described as more “Spiritual” than physical in scripture. God talks to us but is not seen. Not unlike characters in television shows who are never on camera.

God talks to Adam and Eve; Genesis 3:34 “You must not eat fruit from that tree”

God talks to Noah; Genesis 7:1 “Go into the ark”

God talks to Abraham, Job, Jonah and the list goes on. And they all talk with God.

God sounds very much like a Spirit, yet God sends the Spirit at different times in scripture. So the question here is this. Is God a Spirit or is there God and a Spirit?

Next we come to Jesus. Jesus is much easier to understand. Jesus is a male. The Bible clearly says so. And we have pictures!

It is interesting to note that Jesus came into being through the power of the Spirit. As we have read many times in scripture an Angel of the Lord told Mary that by the power of the Holy Spirit she would bear a son and name him Jesus. So who is Jesus? A human God put on earth to show us the true way to eternal life? But Jesus often refers to God as his Father and God refers to Jesus as his son.

Mark 1:11 “This is my son whom I love”

Luke 9:35 “This is my son whom I have chosen”

John 3:16 “that he gave his one and only son”

Jesus is certainly in the family of God. Does that make him God?

I am the fire chief. You are my beloved son. Does that mean you are also the fire chief? Let us rely on our faith here. Yes Jesus is God!!

The Holy Spirit is the most difficult and yet the easiest for me to understand as God. What is a spirit? A non-physical entity. Yet one who talks, leads, and gives you strength to endure when you feel you cannot go another step. The Holy Spirit is a “Free Spirit.” Serious when need be and fun loving if need be. Scripture tends to portray the Spirit as serious all the time. But I believe that the Spirit has guided me through some of the happiest time in my life.

It is interesting to note in John 15 (last week’s Gospel) Jesus portrays the Spirit in masculine terms. John 15:26 “he will testify about me”

Have you encountered the Spirit? There are many stories out there. One such story is about reciting scripture in a crisis and the Spirit will come and protect you. A funny story to lighten up this homily. (Probably not true)

An elderly woman was on her way home from shopping pulling her groceries in a cart behind her when she was approached by two would be robbers. She stopped turned towards them and in a loud voice said “Acts 2:38” The robbers immediately stopped and one said to the other. We better not mess with her. She has her Acts together and she is packing two 38’s.

One more serious note the Spirit was never more evident in my life than when I was asked to deliver the eulogies for my father, my mother, and my father-in-law. Loss of a loved one can be and usually is a crisis.

My father died at the relatively young age of 67 in 1987. Diagnosed with a form of lymphoma he was told by first, second and even third opinions that this was a treatable disease and he could expect five or maybe even ten more years of life. He died ten months after the initial diagnosis.

Mom died twenty years to the day of my father’s death. She spent the last five years of her life in a nursing home with progressive dementia.

Several years later my father-in-law died after battling lung issues. He never did put down that cigar. He died in 2011. He was very special to me having assumed the role of father figure after my dad died.

Giving the eulogy for three very special people in my life could have been very traumatic. I wrote multiple page eulogies for each. However I found myself speaking while rarely referring to my text in a strong calm voice, recalling the many beautiful moments in each of their lives. It was a true celebration of life.

People later asked me how I could speak from my heart with such a calm voice, while rarely looking at what I wrote. The answer is clear. "THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS WITH ME ON THOSE DAYS." The Spirit gave me the strength and courage that I needed.

While thinking of what I might write this week for a homily I began to think of a song I remember singing in church on occasion. It went something like this. "Spirit of the living God fall fresh on me." I consulted with Phil Hovey and with a little research he located the hymnal with that hymn. I would try to sing it for you but believe me the Holy Spirit will be of no help to me. A singing voice is not one of my strong points. So maybe I should ask Phil to sing a verse. In fact I passed out copies of the hymn so you could sing along if you would like.

In the morning it would be nice if we all had the time for a morning devotional or prayer to start our day. I do but then I am "Retired". For you I might suggest reciting the first few words of the hymn. "SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD FALL FRESH ON ME"

As the server at your local coffee shop says to you "Have a good one" pray those simple words from the hymn and I am sure the Spirit will also say "HAVE A GOOD ONE"

Amen.