

God relates with us where we are.

Hello. I am Deacon Jim Doyle. Welcome to St. Pius. It is great to see you on this Father's Day Weekend. We especially welcome those who are visiting and hope you will come back often.

Today is also the feast of the Trinity. Now, first, I did a sort of unofficial review, and determined that of the 12 years I have been ordained, I have probably been asked to preach Trinity Sunday at least six times. Now, I am not saying that the priests in the parishes where I have served conspired to do this because they did not want to preach this Sunday, but it is kind of a big coincidence. Trinity Sunday is the only Sunday of the year that celebrates a doctrine of the Church. And, its not a doctrine that is easy to explain. So, I am not going to try, exactly...

Instead, on this Father's Day, I want to tell you a story about my Dad. For some reason this story sticks in my head...maybe because to this day it amazes me how lightening fast my Dad's reflexes were. One morning during the summer, my Dad got me up early and took me fishing. We found a pretty cool spot along the reservoir bank, and there happened to be a floating dock made out of logs that probably extended out into the water amount 15 - 20 feet. I was only about 8 or 9 years old. We fished for a while, but did not get many bites. So, my Dad decided to go home and get some different bait. When we got home, along with the bait, he also picked up my younger sister and a couple of our even younger siblings. (I think my Mom just wanted some peace and quiet, so she asked him to take several of us with him, and he did.)

As we were on our way back to the fishing spot, my Dad laid out the rules. He told us to stay on the shore, to watch out for each other, and keep quiet and watch our bobbers. We made it back to the reservoir and I commenced to fishing. My sister, who was pretty much a novice fisherman, had no idea what she was doing, and decided to walk further out on the dock, ignoring my Dad's clear directions. My dad noticed this and instinctively moved in her direction and ended up just behind her a second before she missed a step, stepped off the dock and started to go into the water. Somehow my Dad reached out, got his hands under her arm pits, grabbed her and pulled her up onto the dock. I do not remember for sure, but I think my jaw dropped open. My Dad had sprung-in like a super hero and saved my sister from certain doom (or, at least she would have been pretty wet). But, that's what Dad's do, right?

Like I mentioned previously, today is the only Sunday that celebrates a doctrine of the Church. And, according to scripture scholar Dianne Bergant, the readings usually dictate the theological theme of the day. Today is opposite. The Church gives us the theological theme — Trinity — and the readings are interpreted through the lens of the feast. And, so the Church fathers wanted to use the Gospel from John today to illuminate what the Trinity is all about. If you break it down, you see references to all three parts of the Trinity:

The Son...

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.

The Holy Spirit...

But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.
He will not speak on his own,
but he will speak what he hears, ... and will declare to you the things that are coming.

and,

The Father...

He will glorify me,
because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has
is mine.

So, all three aspects of the Trinity are mentioned but, what does it mean for us? Well, the line in the Gospel that caught my attention and on which I keep returning is the first line: *“Jesus said to his disciples, ‘I have much to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.’”*

A couple of weeks ago, I happened to be in Romania just as the Pope was finishing his visit to the country. To be honest, I first realized the Pope was visiting around the same time when I tried to book a hotel and could only find one on the outskirts which, as it turned out, was probably available only because the A/C was not working. Nonetheless, all of the Papal flags and other decorations were still up — including a giant flag in one of the round-a-bouts. Although I did not get to see the Holy Father, I picked-up on the awesome vibe, and it was pretty cool. I later read in a magazine article, *Surprised by Joy: Catholicism is Alive and Well in Romania*, that only about 5% of the population of Romania is Roman Catholic, but that 86% are Orthodox. The author noted that recent studies have found that Romania is the most religious country in Europe.

While we were there we went with a tour guide to see Dracula’s Castle. On the two hour trip to the castle, we talked with our tour guide about the country and he told us something which made me think of today’s Gospel and the meaning and importance of the Trinity. He told us that he believed that only now are the people of Romania ready to hear, listen to and understand God. He said that he believes this is true in life generally, as well — that we are not always ready to receive and understand what we experience. He used the example of technology, suggesting that if you handed an iPhone to a pre-historic man, he would not know what to do with it.

I think that maybe this is why we understand God as the Trinity. When we are children, we need parents who lay down rules to keep us safe and healthy. And, like my Dad who caught my sister, we need someone to watch over us and to catch us when we fall — just like my Dad caught my sister as she fell into the water. But, as a father whose daughters are now growing into their 20s, and are becoming more independent, I can clearly see that although they sometimes still need guidance, more importantly, they need support...the support of brothers, sisters, friends. Jesus came to us at the precise time in history when we needed him most — when we need God to not only watch over us, but to walk with us, support us, be with us.

And, finally, as I am growing older, I am learning more and more the importance of Wisdom — of which we hear in our first reading, has been present with God from the before time. As we grow older, it is this wisdom that allows us to begin to understand what we could not understand and appreciate as children, young and middle-aged adults.

God relates with us where ever we are in our lives. He is a law giving father; a supportive brother/sister/friend; and, he is also the spirit of Wisdom that speaks to us as we grow older.