

St Pius & St Anthony Homily Trinity Sunday Year A1

Where does one start, preaching about the Trinity? I suggest that it is like swimming. It doesn't matter how you get into the pool, whether you ease into the shallow end, or leap into the deep end: if you are going to perfect your strokes, you have to just get into it and do laps, and continue to keep at it. ***So where does one start, preaching about the Trinity?***

Well, I think it starts with Baptism which is not really something we explain, but is something we have to experience first to know. Something we receive gratuitously from God, and a life that God invites us to become a part of, or become united with Him by His own initiative. As our own gospel today indicates (the most popular John 3:16!), "God so loved the world, He sent His son (for us to receive). We didn't petition God for Jesus' coming. No, we were just stuck in our sin, and needing help. And God took pity on us, to show us mercy. Or as the first letter of John says, *"it is not that we loved God, but that he loved us first"* (1 John 4:10) Or Jesus who tells us at the Last Supper, *"it was not you who chose me, but I who chose you"* (John 15:16) So, our starting out point in talking about the Trinity is to realize that it is not any of our doing, but God's giving/sharing, to bring us into His Life.

But let me step back for a minute, to confess that I have been known to jump into things at times, that turn out to be bigger than I thought initially it would be: like when taking on certain jobs (maybe talking about Trinity!)

For example, in a parish I was in once, I had a free Saturday morning so I thought I would get out and tackle trimming up the long row of bushes alongside the parking lot. I was just getting started when a young fellow came by, stopped his car, and talked with me for minute. Then he went on to get to his work. Well, I got into the task of trimming bushes and finished and was back the rectory getting ready for Saturday afternoon mass, when a call came in from a parishioner and she was asking "Are you okay?" I responded, "Well yeah, why?" She said, *"Because Adam my son asked me, to check on you. Did you even get close to finishing today?"* I said, "Well yeah." Then she went on, "He mentioned you only had those rose bush hand pruners tackling those bushes." It hit me--*Ohhhhh, now I know what is up.* The church had a long row of full-size juniper bushes or yews and when the guy pulled up, I had just started and because there were several long shoots that stuck out far and had about 1-1½ inch diameter stems, I was

using a small hand pruner to get them out of the way, before using the gas-powered hedge trimmer. So, he thought I was going to clip trim all the bushes with those hand-pruners! He must have thought I was out doing penance (as a kid I did hear sometimes a threatened punishment being told, “Brian, if you keep that up, I am going to make you cut the yard, with a pair of scissors!” Or what’s the Navy punishment – to wash the deck with only a toothbrush!’ Again, I have been known to jump into a job without the right tools, but not that time.

So, I think about such a monumental task, when facing, preaching about the Mystery of God’s identity: The Holy Trinity of Divine Persons.

Maybe you have heard the classic story about St Augustine. *It is told that while he was writing his master work on the doctrine of the Trinity, that he decided to take a break between chapters and go for a walk. He saw a little boy digging a hole in the sand, and then he ran over to the ocean, filled up his hands with seawater, and then ran back to the hole to empty his hands, pouring the water into the hole. Augustine watched as the child went back and forth several times. Finally, he said to the boy, “What are you doing?” The boy said, “Trying to fill that hole with the ocean.” Augustine told him, “You’ll never fit the ocean in that hole.” And the boy (like a divine visitor), said back to him, “And neither will you be able to fit the Trinity into your mind.”*

But, because we cannot **fully explain** God the Trinity’s Life, does not mean we shouldn’t try to better familiarize ourselves with God’s Identity. And we start with what Jesus revealed to us, that God is Father, Son & Holy Spirit (three in one-one in three). We can find such Trinitarian references all through the gospels. Jesus is the most readily singled out person of Trinity for us to easily relate to because He shared fully our human experiences with us. Jesus always self-identifies as the Son of God in His speech. We don’t have to think any farther than to remember his greatest prayers: “Our Father who art in heaven’ (Matt 6:9-13) or “Father forgive them...” (Luke 23:34) or His prayer, “Father, take this cup from me...” (Luke 22:42) Of course, Jesus also taught about the Father, that “I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me-Father” (Jn6:38) and that He shared in the Father’s Glory when He said, “Glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you”(Jn 17:5). Then Jesus later added teaching, revealing the Holy Spirit, mostly at the Last Supper promising the apostles the return of the Spirit-Advocate to be with them always (“the Spirit will

lead you into all truth"- affirming His presence in Jn 16:13 & 14:26). So, the Holy Trinity is all there in scripture for us, as Jesus revealed His/God's identity to us!

But we may still ask: What does all that mean for me? Well, I suggest that, it is more important for us, that we experience God (not argue over explaining Him- that we pray, are led by Him and live in Him) than that we pride ourselves in formally defining and fully explaining His every attribute. And we remember that it took God first, to reveal Himself to us (we did not make up any of this God stuff). In the end and most simply to me, the Holy Trinity means that God is relationship: that God is personal and God is social. God is a community of three persons in One: not some solitary self-contained It. But a sacred society of three persons so together in Being & Mission that they are also One. Mutually giving to each other, serving, glorifying, & completely sharing self with each other. So, By Jesus revealing God as a Trinity to us, Jesus was saying that God wants to be in relationship (to us). God is always invitational toward us as if saying "Come enter my life-share with me & live my life with me." That is what Baptism does to us. It is our entrance into the Family (we say) of God, the family of the Trinity, the family of God's children- Church. Again, more important for us than to be able to write books about the Trinity, is that we simply pray in Jesus' Name, that we together call God, Our Father and that we live in His Spirit! When St Thomas A' Kempis was asked to define "compunction" once, he responded that it was more important to feel it, than to define it! I suggest the Trinity is that way. The fact that I make a sign of the cross (Trinitarian) as a sign of my baptismal membership in Christ's life) says more about God, than whether I can define God to a 'T'. God is more to us as experienced, than as explained. So, may we always reflect and share with others our life in Christ, as children of the father that moved by the Spirit, we can always invite others to join into such divine fellowship with us.