

[Readings: Deut. 4:32-34, 39-40; Psalm 33; Romans 8:14-17; Matt. 28:16-20]

Only the most dedicated Scrooges among us are unwilling to celebrate, anything, period. (Even the bad guys, the Blue Meanies and Darth Vaders and Tolkien Orcs, exult in the results of their destruction!) But most of us have a lower “celebration threshold” than that. Me, I stoop so low as to celebrate dessert; fresh, clean laundry; a handwritten letter from grateful parishioners; losing three or five pounds! Others may demand occasions with more pizzazz. Celebration, however much or little we express it, is vital to our experience of the joy of just being alive. It’s how we demonstrate our gratitude to others, even to God, for being here. If we do not celebrate, do not feel or show or share our gratitude, then we may fall into a false sense of entitlement, even resentment, concerning what is given to us.

The celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity is, as one theologian has described it, “an idea feast.” Unlike Christmas or Easter or your birthday or the Fourth of July, nothing actually “happened” on a particular day to cause this feast. We aren’t celebrating an occasion but a concept. So what’s to celebrate?

Nearly every other day of the Church year is dedicated to some concrete event or some person. There are many feasts for Jesus, for Mary, for the saints, and for signature moments in the Gospel or the life of the Church. We even celebrate the “Chair of Peter,” which is the office of the pope. And the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, which is the “feast day” of a building used as the pope’s cathedral in Rome. But when you study the Church calendar closely, it becomes clear that we have only a single day all year when we celebrate God, simply and purely -- just God in His Divine Self. That’s today.

Today we acknowledge that there is much to cheer about, much to be grateful for, in our relationship with God. The Creator of all things, who is also the Savior and Redeemer, as well as the Spirit and Consolation of the Church, is literally all things to all people. No one and nothing would be here without God. There would be no “here” here. There would be no one around to celebrate anything.

On this day, we celebrate not only the existence of God, but the relationship that God chooses to have with us. God creates, redeems, and sanctifies us. God brought us and everything into being out of love, rescues us from our worst moves and their ultimate consequences, and “makes us holy” -- that is, gives us the grace we need to become more like ourselves, the people we were made to be, in the image of the Holy One. Sin disfigures us. Grace restores us. God is love, as Saint John says, and love constantly calls the beloved to come home and celebrate.

Being human, we naturally get tangled up in the math when it comes to the Trinity. God is Three in One? Actually, to be precise, the Church teaches that God is One in Three, which is a much deeper mystery. Every Swiss Army Knife or Veg-O-Matic appliance beats the concept of three-in-one hands down. But making a multiple out of one is much rarer. No matter how you do the math, there's always more than meets the eye with God.

God is One; that's the great Jewish revelation to Moses, and the Trinity does not seek to replace that concept or to deny it. We see God's "backside" in the divine passing, as Moses once did, catching God in dust and footprints left behind. Creation is one such lovely, breathtaking footprint. The Incarnation of Jesus, in His life, death, and Resurrection, is another overwhelming passage of God. And the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church in you and in me is a third most exhilarating sign that God is present and moving among us. God is **one**: We know this in three ways.

Today's readings remind us of the mission and ministry of Moses and Jesus Christ and us. Today, Moses says farewell on Mt. Nebo as he witnesses the Chosen People migrate to the Promised Land. Jesus gathers His disciples around Him in Galilee before His Ascension with the command to become joyful missionary disciples.

While praying and preparing this homily, the one verse that caught my eye was "they worshiped, but they doubted." DOUBTED?! These disciples were with Jesus for three years. They witnessed dozens of miracles. They saw the Risen Lord defeat death and walk about them. And STILL "they doubted?" OY VEY! But we have to remember that the Greek word for "doubt" is similar to "being on the fence." Not necessarily doubting or giving up on faith. When Jesus walked on water and commanded St. Peter to do the same, Peter was on the side of faith. When he began to falter and sink, he was on the other side of the fence. The same Greek word is used here. And doesn't it speak to our own faith some days? We are "on the fence." Some days our faith is strong, other days not.

We are called to be the modern joyful missionary disciples. "Joyful" means not "happy" but having the peace of Jesus within you." "Missionary" means to be sent to others to proclaim the Good News. The word "disciple" has at its roots, the same word that means "one person walking with another to go somewhere." Isn't that a great definition? You are walking with someone else to go somewhere. To encounter Jesus. To meet Jesus. To follow Jesus. As disciples, we are very special to all of the Holy Trinity! Are you aware of living in a special love relationship with each Person of the Trinity?

Can you sit and chat with God as Father, God as Savior, and God as Holy Spirit? When you're feeling hurt, can you sit in the Father's lap and receive His comfort? When you're fighting temptation, can you feel the strength of Jesus coming to your rescue? When you're worried or confused or struggling to have faith, are you aware of the Holy Spirit's gentle guidance?

The Father of Jesus is our own, very special "Abba" (the childlike Jewish word for "Daddy" in the reading from Romans). We may have been raised with an image of the Father as someone to fear, a punishing authority who barely understands you. No, He gladly adopted you during your baptism, because He's a doting daddy who provides for our needs.

When someone confesses to me being distracted during Mass with preoccupations and thoughts, I give them image of sitting on God the Father's lap in a rocking chair. The Father gently rocks and asks, "What is on your heart, on your mind? Make that a prayer to Me. I care about you." The other person says, "You, sitting on God's lap in a rocking chair?" And I reply, "Yes, it's a big rocker, and God has a very big and strong lap!"

The Holy Spirit assures us, embraces us and comforts us and teaches us everything we need to know so we can live in the joy of a life that's full of love. And in that love, Jesus sacrificed himself for us so that we can be free from the punishment of sin and live holy lives with the help of His Holy Spirit. God is a Holy Trinity of helpers, healers, strengtheners, and faith-builders.

God wants you to live in the fullness of His divinity! God wants you to benefit from all that God is. As baptized Christians and as sacramental Catholics who have God's presence fully available in the Eucharist, we lack nothing that really matters! We lack nothing that really matters. And so, with confidence, we can pray: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. AMEN!