

Holy Trinity 2018

"How long does it take to get to heaven? ", said the teacher. "A week to 10 days", answered the little girl.

"And how do you know?", said the teacher.

"Well Jesus ascended into heaven on Ascension Sunday and said He would send the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and it took a whole week for Him to get here!"

Last week was Pentecost and lots of folks commented on how much they felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. I reminded them that the whole parish had prayed a novena and that's what happens when a church prays. The Holy Spirit comes to those who ask.

Today, is the feast of the Holy Trinity. Remember the word holy refers to something or someone that is used for a sacred purpose.

Trinity means three. So the Holy Trinity is three persons, father, son and Holy Spirit, but one God.

Their sacred purpose is to be a community of persons, to live and be in perfect communion with each other. Perfect means complete. Not lacking anything.

As we move forward in our capital campaign for our parish, we hear a lot about pledging and sacrificial giving.

We have to have money for more classrooms and meeting space and tornado shelter,
But it really isn't about the money, or the projects,
it's about coming together as a community in unity and strengthening our parish family.
The campaign is just another opportunity for us to grow closer to each other to better reflect the body of Christ to our community.

So now that everyone is perfectly clear on who and what the holy trinity is we can move on.

Of course that's not true. We can't ever fully understand The Trinity because it's a mystery.
It's not something we will ever fully comprehend.

Wars have literally even fought over this teaching of the Church, and we're still fighting about it.

In Nazareth where Jesus was from, a huge basilica is built over the house where the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she had been chosen to be the mother of God.

Outside the basilica in a little park across the street was a big sign that said, "there is only one God and Allah is his name, and he did not have a son."

So the trinity is not easy to understand unless you think of God in terms of a community of persons.

I sometimes think of a candle to explain the holy trinity.
God the father is the candle, Christ is the light, and the Holy Spirit is the heat that comes from them.

Of course all metaphors fall short of explaining the Trinity.

In the movie, Polar express- the train that goes to the North Pole where Santa lives, they were talking about mystery, they said some of the most real things are the things we don't see.

The word mystery itself expresses our belief in something beyond ourselves that we can't quite put into words.

Mystery comes from the Latin word mysterium, which means secret or hidden.

It's where we get our words mystical, mystify, music and muse.

We have always loved love songs and poetry about romance.

But All the love songs and poems have never quite captured or explained what we know and feel to be true in our hearts, so we do our best to write songs or poetry to try and express that feeling.

That's what a mystery is like. It's not something you can see or measure but you know it's true.

There is the old and much-repeated story about St. Augustine, one of the intellectual giants of the Church.

He was walking by the seashore one day, attempting to come up with an intelligible explanation for the mystery of the Trinity.

As he walked along, he saw a small boy on the beach, pouring seawater from a shell into a small hole in the sand.

"What are you doing, my child?" asked Augustine. "I am emptying the sea into this hole," the boy answered with an innocent smile.

"But that is impossible, my dear child," said Augustine.

The boy stood up, looked straight into the eyes of Augustine and replied, "What you are trying to do - comprehend the immensity of God with your small head - is even more impossible." Then he vanished.

The child was an angel sent by God to teach Augustine a lesson.

Later, Augustine wrote: "You see the Trinity if you see love." According to him, the Father is the one who loves, the Son is the loved one and the Holy Spirit is the personification of the very act of loving. This means that we can understand something of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity more readily with the heart than with our feeble mind.

When we make the sign of the cross, we are making a public statement of faith. We are saying that we believe in the trinity, father, son and Holy Spirit.

We are also asking God to bless us or someone else. Which is why you see people cross themselves when they pass by a cemetery, because they're praying for their souls.

Or when we drive by a Catholic Church we cross ourselves because the blessed sacrament is present.

But we are also making the sign of the cross when we speak the words of the trinity, which is the instrument and cause of our redemption.

So when you cross yourself again today, remember it's a statement of faith and a prayer.

Do I believe what it means?

If I don't, then I can still cross myself as a prayer for God to help my unbelief.

As St. Thomas Aquinas said, grace builds on nature. Or rather grace perfects my human nature. Our human nature is good but incomplete, imperfect.

The perfect Trinity desires nothing less than your completion.

And the way that we get there is in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit.