

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Evensong on Trinity Sunday
May 31, 2015

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Although the Solemnity of Christ the King marks the end of the Church Year, it makes sense to assert Trinity Sunday also makes a statement at the end of our efforts. All year from Advent to now we have followed the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of Christ in God's plan of redemption. Through the lectionary provided for Sunday and Holy Day Masses we ponder every aspect of Our Lord's life and teaching. We have begged Christ's grace to conform our lives to His life and teaching. And then the great event of Pentecost launched the Church into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost signals the arrival of a time in the Church Year to proceed to concentrate on the account of those mighty deeds which brought about the conversion of so many souls.

But that is not what happens, at least not immediately! *Contemplation, not evangelization, comes first.* In order to sell something you have to have something to sell. Following the mysteries of Christ and studying every aspect of Our Lord's Incarnate Life leads Holy Church to the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity. Everything leads to the Three Persons as they exist in the glory of Heaven. Trinity Sunday draws everything to the conclusion.

Saint John the Divine saw that "A door was opened in Heaven" and he looked in. And what St John saw did not bother him because there was no Baby in a manger as a visual focus. There was no Risen Lord appearing behind closed doors to the apostles, or in the garden to Mary Magdalene. All of that: the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, the Church, her Scriptures and Sacraments, have their ultimate purpose that we may see and be united to Almighty God in the Beatific Vision. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" not to make the world a better place, (although that has happened). It was not to comfort each of us on our earthly journey, (although that has happened). Christ did not come simply to found the Church and establish the sacraments (though He did these things). Christ came to lift us up to God, that where He is we might be also. Again, Trinity Sunday draws everything to the conclusion.

The Catholic Faith teaches us the life, personality, character, human capacity for happiness and of *giving* happiness, and the beauty of each individual, all come from God. He is a God Who is no abstraction, no mere formula invented for the

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convenience of the human mind. He does not spend eternity in solitary splendor and perfection. Rather, Almighty God is a Unity of Trinity. His personality is self-giving and self-sacrificing. The prophet Isaiah caught a glimpse of this Unity of Trinity in his vision of Heaven, where the seraphs each cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts.” Isaiah was looking into heavenly things and seeing far ahead. In the fullness of time we are beneficiaries of the full revelation of God in Christ. The love of the Eternal Father gives forever His whole being to the Only Begotten Son. The love of the Eternal Son returns for ever all His infinite capacity of loving to the Father, and expresses it continually in creation. And the love of the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from both, for He is their love. All the splendors of the Blessed Trinity spring from and resolve themselves in mutual love.

This is lofty language. But the Divine Life of the Blessed Trinity is not just an ideal of perfection. Our observance isn't provided to give high thoughts to our minds once a year on the Sunday after Pentecost! The Dogma of the Trinity expresses the divine mystery of the actual fact of the real relation between every human being and Almighty God. Every part of the Creed touches with light upon the deepest roots of human nature. It awakens in human hearts capacities for joy and sacrifice which could not otherwise be there. The Catholic faith has effectively changed and raised human life wherever men and women have accepted it. Even the poorest soul spiritually was created for the splendors of the mutual love of the Blessed Trinity. Are there racial, social, economic, and political obstacles along the way? Of course there are! These are provided at no extra charge courtesy of fallen human nature. But no soul on earth is too impoverished that it cannot welcome Divine Love. Saint John is speaking for *the entire human race* when he says, “We love, because He first loved us.”

Our personal being, yours and mine, issued from the mutual love of the Three Divine Persons. God is our Source, and He is our End. He has made us for Himself. What a tragedy when Christians, of all people, conceive of Almighty God in the same way as the cozy gods of the pagans, or make of Him a shelf-god of the kind exposed in the satire of the Book of Jonah. The Solemnity of the Holy Trinity bids us lift up our hearts to gaze through the open door of the Blessed Sacrament

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into Heaven, to contemplate, regularly and frequently, the splendor of God's holiness, His attributes of love, justice, mercy, and truth. When we strive to do so we are in good company! Right next to us on the church's kneelers are the fully recollected and absorbed joyfulness and reverent worship of the angelic hosts, which even now are bowed before the Throne of Grace