

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Trinity Sunday  
May 27, 2018  
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Because today's solemnity is a *doctrinal* feast, the Holy Trinity is unique in the Church's calendar. All year long Sunday gospels focus on historical circumstances we can visualize. We can picture in our minds Jesus in the cradle at Bethlehem, changing water into wine at Cana, or hanging on a cross on Golgotha. Trinity Sunday is different. I cannot point to a Biblical event showing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost sitting on three thrones and from which radiates Their glory as One God. And that is probably a good thing. Our minds are used to *dramatic* scenes between Our Lord and various friends and foes. The cover of our Sunday leaflet seems pretty tame by comparison. There is no drama or contention within the perfect love of the Triune God!

“*Sola scriptura*” Christians have some homework when it comes to the proclamation of the Holy Trinity. God as Trinity is only hinted at in the Bible. It is there, but you have to connect the dots. The full awareness of what God has revealed comes to us in the tradition of the Church. The articulation of belief in the Holy Trinity developed as the Church had need. This is not to say it was *invented*, or that the apostles did not regard Jesus as God. They did, He was, and He is! The development of the Trinitarian formula was made necessary by the rise of 3<sup>rd</sup> Century Arian errors covered in smooth language. Much as you do not need traffic laws before the invention of motor cars, so too the Catholic Church did not need precise theological statements about the Holy Trinity before large numbers of people began to stray off into wrong conclusions about the work and Person of Jesus Christ. Once people begin to say what is wrong, it is not enough to say they are wrong. You have to go on to say what is right.

You can read about Arianism on your own. The Arians were the ancestors to Unitarians. And when Islam arrived on the scene the Arians rolled over like ten pins when Don Carter was bowling for the Budweiser team. Arians and Muslims boarded different trains but ended up in the same railroad station. Trinitarian theism is what separates Christianity from all other religions.

Saint Hilary of Poitiers implied the Church developed a Trinitarian statement somewhat *reluctantly*. He said, “The errors of heretics and blasphemers force us to deal with unlawful matters, to scale perilous heights, to speak unutterable words, to

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trespass on forbidden ground. Faith ought in silence to fulfill the commandments, worshipping the Father, reverencing with Him the Son, abounding in the Holy Spirit. The error of others compels us to err in daring to embody in human terms truths which ought to be hidden in the silent veneration of the heart.”

Way back in the 60<sup>th</sup> Chapter of *Isaiah* the sun and moon are dismissed and all the glory of creation steps aside. Why? Because “Thy God is thy glory.” Created glory takes a back seat to uncreated glory. God is our glory first of all because *He is*. That is Bible speak. But God is also our glory because of *what* He is, and which He has revealed to us. He is not only an uncreated Unity, but also a blessed and ever-glorious Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And there is something very practical about that. Where would God the Father be without the Son? He would be a far-off abstraction. Rabbis sometimes tell Christian how lucky we are. They say “When we Jews talk about God we have to refer to the Law of Moses and the Prophets. You Christians can point to Jesus.” Jesus shows us the Father’s heart. And what would Jesus be to us without the Holy Ghost? He would be a marvelous man we could list alongside other marvelous men. Which was there those Arians ended up. It is the Holy Ghost Who shows us the Saviour. St Paul says, “No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.”

And then God is our glory because of *what He has done*. In His Own good time the Creator gave us His Beloved Son Who broke down the wall of partition which separated us from God. And the Holy Ghost, at one with the heart of the Father, takes us through Christ to the Father. In *Ephesians* St Paul says, “We have access to the Father through the Son, by the [Holy] Spirit.”

Ever since the day we are baptized each of us bears the Name of the Glory of God. We are baptized “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” It is not an incomprehensible formula, for it is the full Name of God Who loves us and has comes to us that we might be with Him forever. With St Hilary let the inner workings of the Holy Trinity remain hidden in the silent veneration of our hearts. That is where we know His love is the only origin we have, and just as in any family, for us it is home.