

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Trinity Sunday
June 16, 2019

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You may remember one of the original Dr. Seuss' children's books had the title "*If I Ran the Zoo.*" With that in mind, it might make sense to observe Trinity Sunday at the *end* of the Church Year. From Advent through Easter and Ascension we follow the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of Christ in God's plan for redemption. We study every aspect of Our Lord's life and teaching. We beg His grace to conform our lives to His. Then after the great Feast of Pentecost, when we commemorate the launching of the Church into the world by the power of the Holy Ghost, we could proceed directly to concentrate on those mighty deeds in the lives of the saints which brought about the conversion of so many souls. But Holy Church doesn't do that! Instead, the mysteries of "*The Word made flesh and dwelt among us*" leads to the Feast of the Holy Trinity. The revelation of God in Christ leads to contemplation of the Three Divine Persons in the glory of Heaven.

In *The Book of Revelation* Saint John saw "a door was opened in Heaven" and he looked in. That is our invitation to look in. Do not be put off because today's feast does not focus on a Babe in a Bethlehem manger or the Risen Lord appearing to Mary Magdalene in the Easter garden. The *ultimate purpose of all that*, the whole revelation given in the Incarnation of Christ (His Death and Resurrection, Ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost) is that we may see and be united to the Triune God. "*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*" not to make the world a better place (although that has happened). Christ came not primarily to found the Church and provide the sacraments to comfort us here (although that also happened). He uses these means to lift us up to God, that where He is we might also be.

The Catholic faith teaches that life (its personality and character, the human capacity for happiness and of *giving* happiness, the beauty of each individual) all come from God. Our Heavenly Father is no abstraction. He is no formula invented for the convenience of great ideas. He does not sit in splendid isolation and perfection. Rather, Almighty God is a *family*. He is a Unity of Trinity. And because He is being and community, Divine Life is self-giving and self-sacrifice. His very self and His holiness are inseparable.

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The prophet Isaiah once caught a glimpse of this Triune nature of God. Isaiah saw a vision of Heaven where seraphs each cry: “*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.*” And we can say more than Isaiah because 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. His “whole being”? Yes. Our Lord once declared: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” The love of the Eternal Son returns forever all His infinite capacity of loving to the Father, and expresses that love continually in creation. And the love of the Holy Ghost eternally proceeds from both, for *He is their love*. All the splendors of the Blessed Trinity spring from and resolve themselves in Their mutual love.

That is lofty language! But the divine life of the Blessed Trinity is not just an ideal to give momentary high thoughts to our minds once a year on the Sunday after Pentecost! The dogma of the Trinity expresses a divine mystery revealing the true relation between every human being and Almighty God. The Nicene Creed’s three paragraphs are a description of the Triune God. Every part of the Creed exposes the deepest roots of human nature, and can awaken in human hearts capacities for joy and sacrifice that would not otherwise be there. The Catholic faith effectively changes and raises human life wherever souls accept that faith. Even the spiritually poorest soul was created to enjoy the splendors of the mutual love of the Blessed Trinity. No soul on earth is too impoverished that it cannot welcome Divine Love. Saint John was speaking for the entire human race when he declared “*We love, because He first loved us.*”

Our personal being, yours and mine, issues 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 people conceive of Almighty God as something less than Trinitarian, as if He were one of the cozy household gods of the pagans or a genie in a bottle, or the small territorial despot *Jonah* wishes summed up divinity! The Feast of the Holy Trinity bids us lift up our hearts to gaze through the open door of Heaven, to regularly contemplate the splendor of God’s holiness: His attributes of love, justice, mercy, and truth, coming as they do from their source in the perfect unity of Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As we strive to do so, we are invited alongside the

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fully recollected and absorbed joyfulness and reverent worship of the angelic host,
and all the saints, who together bow before the throne of grace.