

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Trinity Sunday
June 7, 2020
+

Trinity Sunday is our annual observance and celebration of the full revelation of Almighty God in Jesus Christ our Lord. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us in Jesus Christ God has said everything. (¶73) Our Heavenly Father always was Trinitarian. Whether they acknowledge the fact or not, when strict monotheistic religions get close to God it is to the Holy Trinity. For in the fullness of time the Father sent the Son Who asked the Father to send us His Holy Spirit. The Son and the Spirit are not messenger-angels from the Father! Our Lord Jesus told St Philip “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (*John 14:6*) And the Holy Spirit is described by our Lord as *another Paraclete* (*John 14:16*), one in addition to Jesus Himself.

We can never wrap our finite minds around infinite God. But the tools we use, our earthbound vocabulary, are as carefully selected as those for any occupation, craft, trade, or profession. A fine art painter is particular about the selection of bristles for his various brushes. An auto mechanic might be saving up to purchase a special high-precision set of socket wrenches. The principal percussionist for the Boston Symphony was not satisfied with the available drumsticks, so he started a business to make his own.

The preacher is no different. He knows that words, even words most often used only in doctrinal definitions, can be misleading. The very name “Trinity” is somewhat unhelpful because, while it affirms the existence of the eternal Three in God, it suggests nothing of the *Unity* of the Three. The Christian doctrine is more fully described as a “triunity” rather than a Trinity. The so-called Athanasian Creed, which describes the Holy Trinity in some detail, is helpful. But it uses words such as “*incomprehensible*,” “*substance*,” “*proceeding*,” and “*person*” that we realize meant different things to 5th Century Christians than they do to us.

None of us is ever satisfied to simply throw up our hands and assert the dogma of the Holy Trinity is a metaphysical puzzle which has very little in common with practical every-day life or getting-on-with-it religion! Our lives demand and deserve and are only satisfied by a *dogmatic* faith.

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Trinity Sunday
June 7, 2020

+

Both the fine art painter and auto mechanic have accepted a dogmatic parameter in which to live and work. Their environment is bound by fixed assumptions within which they seek practical ways to apply their craft or trade. It was a very good thing when my white 1960 Chevy convertible needed a new water pump and my mechanic had not decided that very day to become a landscape architect or pastry chef! And it is a very good thing Catholic truth (which is objective and has its own intrinsic importance apart from its influence on our conduct) is *the necessary platform* for our thinking rightly about Almighty God and expressing that thinking in how we order our lives.

The dogma of the Holy Trinity is not a working definition of Almighty God. That would be impossible. It is Catholic reflection upon the teaching of Our Lord Jesus about God's relationship to us. So before we ever get into the technical language of Christian theology (a language which without guidance can sometimes be confusing and unhelpful) it is important to recognize belief in the Holy Trinity is based on the direct revelation of *the One Who knows best*: Our Blessed Lord.

On Trinity Sunday we celebrate the common experience of all Christians, that the highest type of life can be lived because the highest type of faith is revealed in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost." (2 *Corinthians 13:14*) *Grace* and *love* and *fellowship* are not abstract descriptions of Almighty God. They reveal a personal relationship begun at our baptisms, when we did not receive an incomprehensible formula of words, but incorporation into a family of love: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.