

**Homily for Trinity Sunday, Cycle C
Mass for the Blessing of the Renovated Church,
followed by Blessing of the new Trinity Hall
St. Paul Church, Highland, Illinois**

June 12, 2022

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good to be here today for this Mass for the blessing of this newly renovated church dedicated to Saint Paul, after which we will have the blessing of the newly constructed Trinity Hall. I commend those who have played a role in the renovation of the church and in the construction of Trinity Hall. On behalf of your Pastor, Father Pat Jakel, I also express our gratitude to the benefactors whose generosity has made it possible for these projects to be brought to fruition.

In my first Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, *Ars celebrandi et adorandi*, "On the Art of Celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy Properly and Adoring the Lord in the Eucharist Devoutly," issued on June 22, 2014, I wrote, "The beauty of our church edifices, magnificent works of religious art and the graceful celebration of the liturgy, accompanied by harmonious music, inspiring homilies and the

active participation of the faithful, are the foundational elements that attract people to the liturgy” (n. 11). I expanded on this theme a year later in my second Pastoral Letter, issued on September 14, 2015, *Ars crescendi in Dei gratia*, “On Building a Culture of Growth in the Church,” in which I wrote, “The Eucharist is essentially God’s efficacious action, but we can either cooperate with God’s grace by celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy properly or hinder its effects by failing to do so. Celebrating Holy Mass properly, with a welcoming and caring community, uplifting music, inspiring preaching, heartfelt prayer, and an environment conducive to prayer, will attract people to participate, deepen their connection to God and the Church, and help them to cultivate that interior disposition necessary for the grace of the sacrament to bear fruit. An unfriendly and uncaring community, unpleasant music, poor preaching, insincere prayer, and an environment distracting from prayer will turn people away” (n. 54).

These principles were adopted as the eighth declaration of our Fourth Diocesan Synod, which says: “The art of celebrating the liturgy properly and adoring the Lord in the Eucharist devoutly (*ars celebrandi et adorandi*) is the key to fostering the active participation of the People of God

in divine worship. The clergy of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois must consider the celebration of the liturgy as their principal duty.”

I commented on this declaration in my third Pastoral Letter, *Ars vivendi et moriendi in Dei gratia*, issued June 22, 2018, “On the Art of Living and Dying in God’s Grace,” writing that “I included the topic of the *ars celebrandi* among the declarations of our Diocesan Synod because the main thrust of our efforts to foster discipleship in our parishes depends to a great extent on the proper celebration of the liturgy itself. If we want our parishes to grow, we must offer good liturgical experiences that will attract people. If we want our parishioners to become dedicated missionary disciples, we must help them to experience the liturgy as a genuine encounter with the Lord” (n. 29b).

Thus, while a beautifully renovated church is a key element in attracting new members to the Church, it is not the only factor. We must make sure that our community is also inviting and attractive, where the love of God for His people and the love of the people for God and for each other is readily apparent and experienced by those who come to pray here.

It is fitting that the blessing of your parish’s new Trinity Hall takes place today as the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity. Our

Lord's final instructions to His disciples, as recorded in the conclusion of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, is His Great Commission, in which Jesus says, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Indeed, our life as Christians begins with our baptism, and the formula for the Rite of Baptism is still exactly as Christ taught, with the invocation of the Holy Trinity: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This is essential to our Christian identity, but do we reflect sufficiently on what this truly means?

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the 'consubstantial Trinity.' The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire. . . . They are distinct from one another in their relations of origin: It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds" from them (nn. 253-254).

Perhaps it is most helpful for us in understanding the Holy Trinity to focus on the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In the words of the *Catechism*, “The divine persons are relative to one another. Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: In the relational names of the persons, the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance” (n. 255).

The Father, Son, and Spirit are in relationship to each other as members of a family. There are three distinct persons, but only one God. Because God is perfect, the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit is a perfect communion of love. Hence, the Bible tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). When we were baptized, we were adopted as sons and daughters of God. In this way, we became members of God’s loving family.

We have all had the experience of meeting someone’s son or daughter, and instantly seeing a resemblance to their parents. So, too, baptized as sons and daughters of God, we should resemble our heavenly Father in our thoughts, words, and actions. Indeed, the Bible tells us that

we were made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26), which means that we can love, create, and truly choose good. Like God, we are capable of truly and freely choosing to do good and to love.

Saint Teresa of Avila, who was canonized a saint four hundred years ago on March 12, 1622, along with Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Francis Xavier, and Saint Philip Neri, wrote that, as she contemplated the presence of the Holy Spirit in her soul, she was *“amazed at seeing so much majesty in a thing as lowly as my soul.”* Then Our Lord said to her: *“It is not lowly, my daughter, because it is made in my own image.”*¹

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you might doubt your own self-worth, remember these words: you are not lowly, because you are made in the image of God. We should keep this in mind when we look upon others as well: they are not lowly, because they are made in the image of God. If you keep this in mind every time you enter this beautifully renovated church and the new Trinity Hall, these will be places where people will feel welcomed as true sons and daughters of God, in the love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ St. Teresa, *Matters of Conscience*, quoted in Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God* (London: Scepter, 2012), vol. 6, p. 255.