

**Homily for Trinity Sunday, Cycle A
June 4, 2023**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is a core belief of Christianity. For Roman Catholics, this doctrine is the central affirmation about God, affirming one God who eternally exists as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This doctrine was officially formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Even though the word Trinity does not occur in the Bible, the elements that eventually became the foundation blocks of this doctrine are found in the Gospels and the letters of Paul.

“God so loved the world.” This famous verse from John 3:16 expresses how much God loves the world. This love is communicated through the gift of the Incarnation wherein God gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him can have the eternal life that comes through the Holy Spirit. Notice the presence here at work of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Even when fully defined, the doctrine of the Trinity will remain a mystery. Believers can grow deeper in its reality, but they can never fully understand it.

Saint Catherine of Siena offered this prayer that expressed her love for the Holy Trinity: "You, O Eternal Trinity, are a deep source, into which the more I penetrate, the more I discover, and the more I discover, the more I seek you."¹

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. Looking at the Trinity as a family helps us to understand this mystery. Just

has a human family has several persons – mother, father, and children – yet can be considered a single family unit, so the Holy Trinity has three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – yet is 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 and one 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.”²

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.

As we receive Our Lord in this Eucharist, may His Body and Blood transform our body and blood, so that we may truly become more loving members of His Mystical Body and more authentic Christians who have been baptized in the name of the Most Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue*, 167.

² St. Teresa, *Matters of Conscience*, quoted in Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God* (London: Scepter, 2012), vol. 6, p. 255.