

TRINITY SUNDAY 2018
SERMON-FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
REV 4.1-11 ST JOHN 3.1-15



Let's go back to Trinity Sunday 2009...the Parish Mass has concluded...everyone is greeting the Celebrant and Preacher (that would have been me) and each other.

The great Fifth Century theologian Saint Augustine of Hippo was quoted in the sermon. He tried to explain the Trinity as a love relationship...the Father loves the Son...the Son loves the Father...and the love that flows between them is so perfect is the Third Person of the Trinity...the Holy Spirit.

"That was a good sermon, Father", said a parishioner, "but what you said still doesn't explain the Trinity." The problem with Trinity Sunday is the temptation to try to explain the Trinity in a way we can all understand. We call it the Mystery of the Holy Trinity...and so it is.

Trinity Sunday is largely about the *Doctrine* of the Holy Trinity...the teaching God exists as Three Persons one God...Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Trinity have a dynamic relationship with each other...and we are caught up in that relationship from the moment we are baptized...marked with the sign of the Trinity.

The Feast of the Holy Trinity was instituted by Bishop Stephen of Liège in the 10th Century. For many years the Popes resisted the idea of purely theological feasts that weren't based on an historical event...like the Birth, Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. It wasn't until 1334 when Pope John XXII directed the feast be celebrated throughout the Church.

The great English mystery writer, Dorothy L. Sayers, best known for her Lord Peter Wimsey detective stories, was once asked what she thought of the Doctrine of the Trinity. She replied, "The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Spirit incomprehensible, the whole thing incomprehensible. Something put in by theologians to make it more difficult...nothing to do with daily life and ethics".

Sayers might be right...but only to a certain point. The Doctrine of the Trinity may be incomprehensible. That's why we call it the

Mystery of the Trinity. But the Holy Trinity is not a doctrine...and it is very much active in our daily life and ethics.

We invoke the Name of the Trinity multiple times in every service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. When we were baptized, the priest poured water over our heads and said those very words. He then made the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads and "received us into the congregation of Christ's flock".

When we were confirmed, the bishop made the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads with oil, asking God to increase the Holy Spirit in us. He does the same when a man is ordained a priest. And when a priest lays hands on a person to pray for healing, he does so in the Name of the Trinity and signs the person with the Cross.

The Sign of the Cross is the outward and visible sign of our belief in the Trinity. Like all of the manual acts we make during the Mass, the Sign of the Cross teaches us something about our Faith. The priest makes the Sign of the Cross when giving Absolution and Blessing. Our worship of God involves our whole being, mind, body and soul. It is above all, an action!

We will be in the Trinity Season for the next twenty-six Sundays. That should give us a good indication of the role the Holy Trinity plays in our lives here at Saint Joseph Parish and elsewhere. The Holy Trinity will be with us when we die and afterward. At a Requiem Mass, we pray that the dead person who was "sealed with the sign of the Trinity" while alive, will have everlasting rest and be welcomed into heaven by the Angels and Saints.

There is no doubt the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are caught up in a love relationship with each other and with us. We may not fully understand the mechanics of that relationship...but we do experience the Holy Trinity in our lives.

One Christian blogger wrote when we try to over-explain the Trinity we stop the Trinity and start examining it. As soon as we do, it stops being the Trinity and being one God.

Today we acknowledge the Trinity as the One God we ask in the Collect to keep our faith strong and defend us from all adversities.

