

Trinity Sunday 2020
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Rev. 4.1-11 St. John 3.1-14



Welcome to Mystery Sunday! Every year on Trinity Sunday we celebrate a central doctrine of Christianity...the belief God is one in three Persons...three Persons in one God. We may never fully understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity...but it has the power to change our lives.

Doctrines are important because they define core beliefs...political and religious. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States along with the Bill Rights teach us how we think American society should function. We can't have relationships with political or religious doctrines but we can experience the ideals they talk about through our relationships with each other.

In a sermon several years ago, I tried to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity in the way it was explained to me...as a love relationship: the Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father and the love that exists between them is the Holy Spirit. After Mass, a parishioner said to me, "Well, that's all very good, but it doesn't help much. It's still a mystery to me." That was a watershed moment in my life.

Many inspired theologians over the centuries have come up with complex formulas that try to explain in ways they think we can understand the mechanics (mystery) of the Holy Trinity...the "how" of the Holy Trinity. It's more productive trying to see the affects of the Holy Trinity in the positive life changing events we experience in our lives and the lives of those around us...and especially in the life and the work of the Church.

If we think of Baptisms and Funerals as the two Liturgical bookends of Catholic Christianity, we begin to understand the Holy Trinity is present throughout the Sacramental Life of the Church. We are baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In of the prayers the Celebrant says at the end of a Requiem Mass, he asks God to give eternal rest to the dead person, who while alive was sealed with the sign of the Holy Trinity.

Perhaps one of the greatest prayers addressed to the Holy Trinity is Saint Patrick's Breastplate, attributed to the great 5th century Saint. It is a prayer asking for God's protection Patrick is reported to have said every morning. In 1889, it was adapted into the hymn *I bind unto myself today, the strong Name of the Trinity* (#268 Hymnal 1940). The hymn is often sung on Trinity Sunday, at ordinations and most recently at the funeral of a much-loved parishioner who felt a deep connection to the Trinity.

In 325 AD, the Emperor Constantine called a council of all bishops of the Church to resolve a major disagreement over the nature of Jesus. A brave deacon by the name of Athanasius said there is one God who has always existed in the three Persons of the Trinity...who exists now...and who will exist forever.

Athanasius' chief opponent was a popular and well-educated priest from Alexandria named Arius who taught that Jesus was created by and subordinate to the Father. According to Arius' way of thinking, Jesus was something other than fully God and fully Man.

The Council of Nicaea produced the document known as the Nicene Creed and which we just said together. It occupies the place of importance it has in the Liturgy because it teaches what Catholic Christians have believed everywhere and at all times! We believe in one God in three Persons...three persons in one God!

Yes, the Holy Trinity is a mystery. A May 2014 article by Carol Powell from an on-line news service called The Tablet put it this way...

...*"The mystery of the Trinity is not a dilemma to be solved or figured out. It is a deep mystical spiritual reality that cannot be intellectualized or analyzed completely. It can only be experienced through love, the love that is poured out from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit."*

So let Holy Trinity be the Holy Trinity...to be loved and embraced...and not a mystery to be solved.

