

Trinity Sunday 2022
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Revelation 4.1-11 St John 3.1-15

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Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957), English novelist, playwright and poet, is best known for her Lord Peter Whimsey crime novels. She was sometimes criticized for making Lord Peter too perfect in solving murder mysteries.

In 1939 she published a pamphlet entitled “Strong Meat”. The pamphlet is readily available on line...you can just print it out. It makes for an interesting read. Ms. Sayers describes her pamphlet...in which she discusses basic tenets of the Christian Faith...as intended for a mature reader...one who through prayer and practice has learned to distinguish between good and evil.

Here is what she has to say about the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity...“*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*”.

The Doctrine of the Trinity-that the One God exists in Three Persons, One Substance-is a basic tenet of Christianity. It’s one of those things we believe to be true and must believe to be saved. But while the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity is essential to our Faith...we can’t have a relationship with the Doctrine. We do have a relationship with the Holy Trinity...Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The fifth century theologian and Doctor of the Church, Saint Augustine of Hippo, put it this way: “The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and the love that flows between them is so perfect it is the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit”. A parishioner once said to me after Mass, “That’s nice! But what does it mean?”

Lord Peter Whimsey had a knack for solving mysteries...and we like to see mysteries solved. But we call it the Mystery of the Holy Trinity for good reason. The more we try to figure it out...the more we reduce the Mystery of the Holy Trinity to a formula we feel we must solve. Dorothy Sayers is right to a certain point...theologians sometimes have a tendency to complicate things.

If we go back to Augustine’s formula...while imperfect...it does describe a dynamic love relationship that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We get caught up in that dynamic love relationship when we are baptized...and it carries us through our life on Earth until the day we die. In trying to explain the Mystery of the Holy Trinity...we make it difficult on ourselves...we should just let the Holy Trinity go to work in our lives being what it is...the Holy Trinity.

We get an idea of how important the work of the Holy Trinity is in our lives in the way the *Book of Common Prayer* numbers the Sundays after Pentecost. We call this the Season of Trinity...which is a bit shorter this year. We have twenty-two Sundays after Trinity and the Sunday before Advent (the Last Sunday after Trinity). Then we start the Church Year all over again.

It might surprise us how often we invoke the Name of the Holy Trinity in the Church’s Liturgies. Every Liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer, every Collect and Prayer, we acknowledge the Action of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus told the Apostles to go out and baptize in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...and to teach so we wouldn’t forget what Jesus told us to do.

When we were baptized, the priest poured water over our heads and as he made the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads he thanked God we were “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 him with the Cross.

There are many times during the Eucharist we have the opportunity to make the Sign of the Cross...a visible sign of our belief Father, Son and Holy Spirit are active in our lives. The priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the congregation when he gives Absolution and the Blessing. Manual actions remind us our worship of God involves our whole being, mind, body and soul.

Our love relationship with the Trinity doesn’t end when we die. In the Concluding Rite at the end of a Requiem Mass, we pray that the dead person who was “sealed with the sign of the Trinity” while he or she was alive, will have everlasting rest and be welcomed into heaven by the Angels and Saints. The Holy Trinity carries us from cradle to grave...and into life everlasting.

We might agree with Dorothy Sayers and find the Doctrine of the Trinity incomprehensible. That’s why we call it the Mystery of the Trinity. Some of us might find Augustine’s formula helpful...some of us might not. One thing is certain. We see the Trinity in operation in this place, at this very moment, and every time we come together for Mass. And that compels us to believe.

It’s less important for us to try to figure out the how of the Trinity, than it is for us to experience the love of the Trinity. That’s really the message Sayers is trying to convey. God the Father loves Jesus. Jesus loves the Father. And because Jesus loves us, the Father loves us too. And the Holy Spirit helps us to know that love more perfectly every day of our lives.

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