

JUNE 4, 2023: MOST HOLY TRINITY



A couple of years ago during the pandemic, I walked into Paul Firicano's office and he handed me a sheet of paper he was holding. It was a letter from the Massachusetts unemployment office asking for more information on my claim for unemployment benefits. Obviously, I was not unemployed, and so we immediately got in touch with the appropriate person to find out what was going on. They informed us that someone was using my social security number to apply for benefits. After we confirmed that this was a fraudulent claim, they told me what I needed to do. One of the things I needed to do was freeze my credit reports, to prevent someone from taking out credit cards or getting loans in my name. I immediately did that. I got in touch with each reporting

agency, and they helped me get it all set up. The only time this would be an issue is when I may need to do those things, but it really is not that hard to unblock and re-block my reports.

After dealing with all the nuisances this created, I remember the feeling of being violated in a sense. It was obviously not to the level of what people encounter from real trauma, but it still felt like a piece of me was taken away. Of course I got over it, but it was still pretty unsettling. Someone got hold of a piece of my identity and was using it fraudulently, and that could have caused me real headaches moving forward.

As I reflect on this scary moment in my life, it calls to mind a really important question: what makes up a person's identity? This has become an important cultural question. We use the word 'identity' in a lot of different ways in our society. We have, of course, our financial identity which can be put at risk so easily in this day and age. I would call that simply a practical identity. It does not really determine who we are; it simply helps us to communicate certain information in a convenient way. We have other identities, such as those we use on social media, but what many people present on social media is not really a true snapshot of themselves. Rather, it is something they create in order to present to people how they want to be perceived, but that still does not truly identify who they are.

The real question that most of us need to ask is: how do we get at the heart of what it means to be me? The world has a lot of answers to this question, but in general the path put forth by the world tends to center around the person creating their own truth about who they are. The world believes that people should be able to self-identify, and we must of course accept this 'truth' as being valid. We are called to affirm people and accept whatever personal truth they create for how they choose to experience life.

As Christians this is *not* how we are called to discover the truth about ourselves. Truth is not subjective, nor is it changeable or fluid. There is One, and One alone, who knows the truth of who we are and it is *not* ourselves. Human beings are very good at lying to themselves and that is called self-deception. There are many factors that can create this self-deception but ultimately it lies in sin. If we want to discover the true nature of who we are, we need only turn to God. The truth can only be known when we are in proper relationship with Jesus, who told us He is the way and the truth and the life. He also was clear that He is the *only* way to the Father.

Human beings are created to be in union with God. That is at the essence of what it means to be human. When we deny this truth and start to create an identity apart from our relationship with Christ, we are creating a fraudulent identity. Our true nature is only revealed when Christ is the foundation of our entire life. Christ and Mary are the only human beings who lived a fully human life. Mary did it by living her life centered in Christ. Christ did it by living his life centered in the will of the Father. Mary showed us what we need to do to discern the meaning and purpose of our life. When the angel came to Mary, she spoke those powerful words, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word." And as she watched over Jesus and all that occurred during his childhood years, she pondered over them and treasured them. She gave the best possible advice at the wedding of Cana: "Do whatever He tells you." She stood at the foot of the cross to be with Christ

in his suffering and to unite herself with his suffering. She was with the Apostles in the upper room afterward where they gathered in prayer.

Mary gives us direction about how to discover our true identity. It begins by saying 'yes' to God and accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior. We then need to ponder all that Christ has done and follow his example. We must always be ready to say 'yes' to whatever Jesus calls us to do. And, of course, at the heart of the Christian life is taking up our cross daily and following Christ. Like Mary, we must unite ourselves with Christ on the cross. It is only by dying to ourselves that we can experience the reality of the resurrection. All this is grounded in a prayer life that is united with the people of God.

It is not possible to truly know ourselves apart from Christ. May we seek to follow the example of Mary and come to be the person God created us to be, which is our true identity.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@theholyyrood.org , or if easier please call or text me at (978) 254-0560.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,



Fr. Brian