



Homily for 5/30/2021

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### The Most Holy Trinity

What does it mean to be saved? As with many theological words of import, our English language does us a disservice by its lack of obvious meaning. We aren't given much to interpret unless we know the origins of this word which has been borrowed from our root languages. The verb 'to save' comes through French *sauver* which was derived from the Latin *salvare*. The verb *salvare* in Latin has the noun *salus*. *Salus* means health/safety/wellbeing. In other words, when we say "I am saved" it means I have found wellbeing instead of anxiety, safety instead of danger and health instead of illness.

To be saved, implies that we have moved from a state of anxiety, danger and illness to a state of wellbeing, safety and health. It implies that one who is not saved is still in a state of anxiety, danger or illness. Which of the two corresponds to your state in life? Are you saved or not? I would suggest that the latter seems to perfectly define the lives and status of so many people in the world – they are not yet saved. So many experience anxiety, fear and brokenness of mind and spirit. And yet, there is a curious phenomenon that occurs even among Christians who profess to be saved. Most of us here can boast, "I have been baptized", "I profess to be Catholic", "I come to Church", "I even pray". And yet, there are many, including myself, that still find themselves, from time to time, in a state of anxiety. We are constantly worrying about this danger or that, maybe even putting up defenses and retreating into bunkers old and new to protect against the threats that come our way. We suffer from grave wounds of mind and heart that leave us ill and sick. Though we have been saved, we are still needing to be saved! Now, for some more fundamentalist Christians, the notion of salvation is a once and done thing. Thus, the reality of at once being saved and also not being saved presents a quandary that cannot be answered. However, the Catholic and Orthodox faith, handed down to us from Jesus through the Apostles, is a little more nuanced and presents to us true wisdom. Instead of 'once saved, always saved', the Catholic position would express itself more like, "I have been saved, I am being saved, and I hope to be saved." This implies that in the Christian life there is a constant need for conversion. The first moment of salvation is of course foundational. Just like the first drink of water after being in a desert brings life to the body, so to do the saving waters of baptism save the soul. But if the soul never drinks another drop of saving water it will eventually fall back into the drought it just left. You have to learn to drink healthily for the whole of your life for salvation to continue its work in you. We must continually open up the gift of salvation and apply it to our broken hearts and heads in a process called sanctification – or 'being made holy'. We can only 'be made holy' if we are free from anxiety, danger and illness. Wisdom, be attentive:

Were we broken? Yes. What was broken? Our relationship with God. What is salvation? To be put back into right relationship with God. This happens through the washing away of our sins in Baptism. But the effects of original sin remain. What are the effects? Having a faulty understanding of who God is and who we are in relationship with him. Even the saved labor under the vestiges of these faulty understandings. We have a tendency to fall back into our old habits of mind even after we have received a dose of saving faith. The process of sanctification is the continual process of correcting our faulty vision of who God is and who we are in relationship to Him.

There is, of course, actual content to faith. This takes the form of the doctrine, dogmas and creeds which we profess. Who God is is not something we get to make up or simply choose for ourselves. But there is also the affective side of faith: the act of trust, the surrender necessary for Grace to work in us. This can be described as the psychological/emotional/relational side of faith. It is not enough to know God. One must also trust in Him. So often we get one but leave out the other. Many people are very ignorant of the actual content of the faith, making things up as they go, but are very 'emotionally' intelligent and are able to trust in God. On the other hand, many people are very intellectually convinced of the truths of faith but lack an emotional/affective relationship with God that actualizes that knowledge. Both are needed. The Head and the Heart must be engaged. The Mind and the Soul must be employed. We can study the faith all we want, but until we actually trust in God, we can't say we are healed from our anxiety, fear and illness. Likewise, we can trust and hope but be naïve or immature in our knowledge of God or be led to trust false things, or have false hope due to our lack of knowledge. For instance, if we say that in



God there is only mercy and no justice, we will have false hope that says, “I can do whatever I please and God will forgive me”. Or if we say that God doesn’t care what we do; it is only about how much we say we love Him – it is false love, because love is an act of the will not just a sentiment or mere words. There is the naïve notion out there that God would never let anyone go to hell - a ‘feel good’ sentiment that is false doctrine and is directly contradicted by just about every word that came out of God’s mouth when He dwelt among us. So, we are constantly needing to be saved in mind and in heart, lest we fall into eternal anxiety, fear and death.

One of the great areas of healing is in the notion of who God is. Is God vindictive? Is God cruel? Is God cold and uncaring? Is God indulging or capricious? These are all false notions that must be corrected. Many times, if we are honest with ourselves, we have harbored these false notions of who God is. If you have ever been angry with God, it is usually because you are angry at a false notion of who God is. It is a false and even misleading misrepresentation of the God that is the object of our ire. When speaking about anti-Catholicism in the United States, Archbishop Fulton Sheen once famously wrote, “There are not one hundred people in the United States who hate The Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they wrongly perceive the Catholic Church to be.” Here is wisdom. The same goes for those who claim to hate God or who say they are angry with God. Besides Satan and the evil angels who fell, very few outright hate God. They hate one whom they think is God. If you think God to be cruel, it makes sense to hate Him, I would too. If you think God to be one who likes to inflict punishment, it would be justifiable to be angry with Him. But that is like a child who hates his parents thinking them cruel for subjecting him to the ministrations of a doctor who pokes him with needles or cuts him with scalpels. He cries, wails, bemoans, and shouts that his parents must hate him for such cruel treatment. The truth is that the parents, in fact, love him more than he knows or comprehends. The moment the child sees and understands this, the process of maturing begins. This is the moment the child is healed of his false notions. He no longer resists. He no longer sees danger. He no longer experiences anxiety, and instead readily receives healing. And yet, we still have the impulse to avoid the prick of the needle. This too needs to be healed. I am saved, I am being saved, I hope to be saved.

This Sunday we celebrate the Holy Trinity. God reveals Himself to us as Three in One, a family of relationships called Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is the Head of the Trinity and the one to whom we are ultimately called to have a relationship. We are brought into right relationship with God the Father in the Son and through the Holy Spirit. So, it is right for us to focus on the person of the Father today. God Has revealed Himself definitively as Father, with a capital F. THE Father, whose name and title are the origin and source of all others who would be called father. But this notion of Father, needs to be healed. We need to be saved from false understandings of God because of broken notions of who the Father is. What is your understanding of Fatherhood? Not what examples have you had; rather, who is a father supposed to be? What is the ideal? What is a father supposed to be? Perhaps you haven’t had enough experience of good fathers to even formulate this ideal. Most likely, however, we can formulate this rather well. We all long for a father’s love, approval, admiration, support, pride, honor, providence, wisdom, etc. We long for it even if we can’t articulate it. In fact, when we don’t get those things, we start to break down and it becomes the source of many a problem with our affective/emotional relationships with others and can have huge ramifications for our own self-esteem. Now ask yourself, where does such an ideal come from? The answer is that we are ultimately made for a relationship with our Heavenly Father by design. In His image and likeness we were made, and until we are in right relationship with Him, we will be anxious, fearful and in un-healthy relationships that lead to death. We need to be saved. The reality is that many of those who represent the father to us: biological fathers, spiritual fathers and other authority figures, have marred the image of true fatherhood. Jesus comes to present to us the heart of His Father who is in Heaven. This is salvation. He comes to restore us to Him by teaching us to call Him Our Father who art in heaven. But this is not something that happens once and done in our lives. It is a process that must work through so many wounds, anxieties and fears in order to present them one by one to the Eternal Father that He may take them unto Himself and heal them. We must cast off the lies and falsehoods that swim in our thoughts and replace them with Our Heavenly Father’s true voice that says:



I love you.

You are loved with an infinite love.

You are my beloved.

You are worth more than the world to me.

I desire a relationship with you.

Your sins do not scare me. You are not defined by your failures in my eyes.

You are enough – I don't need anything from you. You don't have to pretend anything around me. My love for you is not dependent on anything you do or don't do. You don't have to earn my love.

I am here for you.

I am your friend. I am your strength.

Yes, you can overcome these things because I am your strength.

Stop trying to do everything yourself. Apart from me you can do nothing, in me you can do everything. All things are possible for me.

Death is not your end. Do not be afraid.

I have prepared a mansion in heaven for you to live with me.

I am your happiness– not money, power or pleasure.

I have given you my name; you are kin to me. You are welcome in my home. My heart is your home, and you have belonging here with me.

I will always be faithful to you. I will never leave you even if you think I have. Trust in me.

I will bear you upon my shoulders; rest in me.

I will bear you upon my wings to the highest peaks.

I will guard you from all danger.

I have commanded my angels to guard you lest you dash your foot against a stone.

I am your refuge. I am your stronghold in times of danger. Do not be afraid. My peace I give you.

With me you will never be alone.

Rest in me.

You are safe with me.

You are saved in me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit!