

Trinity Sunday A (June 4, 2023 STM: 7:30, 9:15)

A nationwide poll asked, "What word or phrase would you most like to hear uttered to you, sincerely?" Can you guess the first thing people wanted to hear? You're right: "I love you." The second was, "You are forgiven." Number three, believe it or not, was, "Supper is ready." (James A. Harnish, "Walking With Jesus: Forgiveness," Tampa, Fla., March 22, 1998.)

How long has it been since we have heard these words spoken to us?

"I love you" -- God's unconditional love.

"You are forgiven" -- God's unmerited grace.

"Supper is ready" -- God's unsurpassed invitation.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, we have returned to Ordinary Time and, as we do so, the Church puts the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity before us. The Trinity is our most important doctrine. But is one that is more difficult to preach about. That may sound strange because it is all about the nature of God. We preachers have to talk about God. Seems strange, doesn't it? Richard Bauckham says that preachers are good at talking about what God wants from us, and are good at talking about what God has done for us. Talking about who God is? Well, that's another matter. Bauckham continues, "Talking about God – by which I mean, not just referring to God, but actually trying to say who God is – is one of those points where language fails us."^[1]

Let me try though. The Christian God is one in three: One God in three divine persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All exist before all ages. The Eternal Father sends the Son into the world. The son is incarnate of the Virgin Mary and dies on a cross to save the world. The Son promises that the Father will send the advocate, the Holy Spirit to forever dwell in and sanctify the Church. They exist as a communion of divine love. This idea of "communion" is really central to understanding our doctrine of the Trinity. Within God there is a community, a "family" of Divine Persons whose perfect love is perfect unity. This divine communion is forever in a loving relationship and it is in the Trinity that we can actually find a place to dwell. There, that is your theology for today. There is a test next week.

There is a great image of the Trinity that is pretty famous. As you came into church today at the baptismal font, you saw an icon of this image of the Trinity. It is usually in an alcove on the way to the Parish Center. I have a small one here. It is Rublev's famous Icon of the Trinity which shows three figures — three divine messengers — who are visiting the Old Testament patriarch Abraham. They sit at a small table, each figure representing a person of the Holy Trinity, and as they sit, they point to a chalice on the table, a symbol of God's overflowing love. But they sit only on three sides of the table. There's an open side, and one of the figures points to the vacant space, inviting the viewer — inviting you — to sit down with the three persons and share fellowship. The icon invites us to share the overwhelming divine

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love that exists among the three figures at the table and to become participants in sharing the mystery of divine life and love. It pictures God's great desire to draw us in and to share the divine life with us. —David Miller, "Sermon for Trinity Sunday," *The Protestant Hour*, June 10, 2001, *Protestanthour.com*. Used by permission of day1.net.

I think this is one of the best ways to speak about the Trinitarian God. This is a God who invites us into the divine mystery, to draw us in and share the divine life with us. The God who we worship is not some distant God, but One who has come and shared in our humanity in every way but sin. This God loved the world from the beginning and created it in goodness and purity. When the world was wrecked by sin, He did something about it. He sent the Son as the Redeemer and that Son came and walked among us and talked to us and ate with us and died among us for our sin. And the Son left us two things to forever invite us into the love of the Trinity: The Holy Spirit to be with the Church forever and the Eucharist as that everlasting embrace of love. Through the Trinity, God speaks those three lines to us: "I love you" -- God's unconditional love.

"You are forgiven" -- God's unmerited grace.

"Supper is ready" -- God's unsurpassed invitation.

Today we are invited into the very life of the Triune God. A place waits for us at the table. We are called to participate in the life of the Triune God. Many of the greatest of the early Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus and Athanasius, wrote eloquently of this "participation" in the life of the Trinity through Jesus Christ. This participation of human beings in the very life of the Trinity through incorporation into Christ is often expressed in the famous patristic adage "God became man that man may become God." (Catholic.org) This is why Christ came to earth—so that we could become more like God. And we do this through our active participation in the life of faith, the life of Trinity.

(9:15: today, we have welcomed and accepted among us those who are seeking to become one with us in the Catholic faith. Today we have invited them into deeper communion with God through sharing our life in the Catholic Church. We welcome you and pledge our support for you as you walk the path to full communion with us.)

We seek to understand the mystery of the Trinity because in some way the Trinity gives us the promise of belonging, of community, of life together. We are invited into community because of who God is. We will never fully understand the entirety of the Trinity and that is not our job. We can understand parts of the nature of God. We can study theology. We can listen to people like me. N.T. Wright suggests, the doctrine of the Trinity isn't so much about our ability to put it into words and understand it, but precisely that we cannot. He writes, "On the contrary: the doctrine of the Trinity is, if you like, a signpost pointing ahead into the dark,

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saying: 'Trust me; follow me; my love will keep you safe.' We are invited into that divine mystery, a communio of divine love that is God himself who continually pledges His love for us, who forgives our transgressions and who provides for us most especially in the sacrament of His body and blood given in the Eucharist. Amen.

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