

Homily.Trinity.5.30.21
Saint Bernard Church
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TRINITY AND INDIVIDUALISM

There is a major point of tension in our country when it comes to religion.

And this weekend's Feast of the Most Holy Trinity in a very clear way highlights this tension.

First of all, let's consider the major characteristics of the Trinity.

The first major characteristic of the Trinity is love.

Jesus addressed the love between Himself and God the Father in the Gospel of John, Chapter 17. He prayed for His followers in these words:

“Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world...I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.”

The teaching of the Church with respect to the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit proceeds from and is an expression of the love between the Father and the Son.

The second major characteristic of the Trinity is unity. Their love for one another is so powerful, so intense that the three persons of the Trinity are united in one substance. The mystery of the Trinity is that the three distinct persons are also one divine being, one God in three persons. They are a communion of persons.

In addition to being a unity of love, the Trinity is a unity of truth.

Jesus said in the Gospel of John: “If you knew me, you would know my Father also...I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me.”

The Holy Spirit, Jesus says in John 14 and 16, “will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you...When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.”

As followers of Jesus, we are to imitate the life of the Trinity. We are to participate in their love and their unity by modeling our lives after the Trinity. We are to live as a communion of persons, too.

Like the Trinity, we are to be unified by love.

Jesus says in John 13:34-35: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you should also love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Saint Paul echoes the words of Jesus in Chapter 2 of his Letter to the Philippians:

"Complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in one heart, thinking one thing...humbly regard others as more important than yourselves..."

Saint Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 that the unity in the Body of Christ is so real that "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy."

The Body of Christ, unified in love, is also to be unified in truth.

Jesus prays to the Father for His followers in these words from John 17: "Consecrate them in truth...And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth."

So, where is the tension I referred to earlier on the subject of religion in our country?

The tension arises from the fact that the influence of individualism in our culture creates a barrier to the unity that is modeled in the Trinity and is supposed to be experienced by our Christian communities.

Individualism is the idea that the individual's life belongs to him and that he should have an unrestricted right to live as he sees fit, to act on his own judgment and pursue the values of his own choosing. The individual is seen as sovereign.

As a result of the emphasis on the individual, we hear a great deal today about diversity, but we don't address what all human beings have in common. We hear very little about promoting the common good. And we're starting to hear a lot more about the increase in loneliness.

When it comes to religion, in a Gallup poll taken several years ago, 80% of Americans agreed with the statement that the individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs independent of any church or synagogue.

We're seeing this in the Catholic Church, where the majority of people who identify themselves as Catholic don't believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. They believe that abortion should be legal and that sexual relations between

persons of the same gender are morally acceptable. I've heard many Catholics say, "The Catholic Church can't tell me what to do. I think for myself."

I'm encouraging all of us this morning to reflect on our attitudes and our experiences as Catholics.

When it comes to our beliefs as Catholics, do we see ourselves as having more authority than the Bible or the Church? Or are we part of the unity of truth that the Body of Christ was meant to be?

Are we contributing to our parish becoming a community of love, where deep friendships are formed and expanded? Where we seek to learn the needs of others and respond to those needs?

I hear parishes described as "active," but I don't know if many Catholics would refer to their parishes as loving. So what can each of us do to make our community here at St. Bernard's more loving?

Here's one suggestion. The Eucharist is not just something Jesus does. Each of us is called to actively participate in the Eucharist by uniting our sacrifices to that of Jesus. So before Communion, say a simple prayer in your own words, something like this:

"Lord, I offer my trial, challenges and anxieties and pray that they be joined with your sufferings. I ask that you accept them, multiply them and redistribute them as blessings for my brothers and sisters gathered with me at this Mass."

This isn't a call for a program. It's a challenge for all of us to examine and change our attitudes. To be part of a communion of persons inspired and guided by the Trinity.