

Bishop Mauney's Holy Trinity Sunday Sermon for Congregations

"Keep your eye on the cross." It is the lens for really understanding the Trinity.

The high mark of the first half of the church year is to be the Sunday of the Holy Trinity. It's the summing up of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. It's the celebration of the work of the Holy Trinity. This Sunday wasn't meant to be the afterthought to mighty Pentecost; it was meant to be the Grand Illumination in the church!! It was to be like the fireworks display we have on the 4th of July!

Like the catechism that begins with the Ten Commandments, pointing out our need for a rescue from God, Advent comes to point out the darkening of the cold winter; that we sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. So, Advent comes proclaiming our need for God causing us to reflect and dawn on us that this relationship with God is everything to us!

So that then at Christmas we can begin to sing with joy about God, "Of the Father's love begotten", and God's creation, "e'er the worlds began to be, he is alpha and omega, he the source, the ending He." So that at Christmas the dawn from on high DOES break upon us with the coming of the Son, in a manger, and the life among us, the epiphany and miracles and parables. And then Holy Week with the horrifying suffering and death by our own hands of our Lord, the resurrection, and the ascension to the right hand and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The Sunday of the Holy Trinity is like the bold confession of the Creed in the Catechism and its explanations of the Apostle's Creed by Luther. It's to proclaiming all that God has done, does, and will do in order that we may be his and live under him.

Three articles of the Creed sum up the first half of the church year like three skyrockets, three explosions in a grand display of one divine love for us.

When I go to see my Ophthalmologist, she says to me, "Keep your eye on my left ear.", and then with a very bright light she looks deep into my eye. Nothing is hidden from the ophthalmologist who knows my eye better than I know it myself, but I keep my eye fixed on the doctor's ear.

"Keep your eye on the prize, hold on!" was the song from the 1960s.

Well 500 years ago, Martin Luther told us to keep our eyes squarely on the cross and resurrection if we wanted to know God, if we wanted the right insight to the Trinity.

Because the cross reveals so starkly this conflict deep down within me about my desire to be God in place of God. My desire not to have to orbit around the will of God, but really wanting God to truly orbit around my will. In fact most of my prayers reflect that. I desire immunity from suffering, I'd like to have arbitrary power, to make a name for myself, to be absolutely satisfied and content, to have no worries or responsibilities. How far that is from the love of God. I want to be absolutely free, without boundaries, without commitments and downers in my life, but God wants to be bound to the life of the

very least, to be utterly committed to the point of being sent, being obedient to a loving will, being emptied, and humiliated, suffering unmercifully in order to show mercy and to show active love for sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. So Luther wrote, "Therefore, sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive....This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person." I want to love the lovely, the graceful, and the ones like myself. But, God longs to love the unlovable, the graceless, and the broken ones so different from God and so like myself.

The human spirit points to moonwalks, cloning, art, and all that we do that reflects nature, the divine spirit points to a manger, cross, and tomb used by God to restore a world that can groan to God and sighs for the Holy Spirit that consoles it.

The human spirit points to Wall Street, the marketplace, and making a killing; while the divine spirit points to the Via Delarosa, the garbage dump, and being crucified by those who wish to make a killing.

Sin, evil, and death cry for the human spirit to have sovereignty. The gospel proclaims that despite what we think or even desire, God has sovereignty- and that's good news.

And God is also the hound from heaven who wills to draw us into the divine life with greater intensity than a black hole in space and with greater compelling warmth than light to a moth. Surely goodness and mercy shall hunt me down all my life.

To enter into the life of Christ and the Father through the Holy Spirit is therefore to enter into their community of humility, loving, caring, suffering for another, even for one of the least in order that that one might have life.

The love of God is for the other, the mortal, the sinful, and the broken. **For Us.**

And to reveal that for as much as we talk about having to repent and debate the value of having a relationship with God in these modern times, God gives God's all to be in relationship with us.

The role that the Holy Spirit plays in the gospel revelation is to remake us into being bearers of this divine intent, love, and life in the world for others who have not yet heard the gospel, to make us ambassadors for the life of Christ, especially revealed in cross and resurrection.

One of my dad's favorite jokes is the ant, who watching a golfer flail at the golf ball, says to her ant friend, "If we are truly going to live, we better get on the ball."

This is the work of the Holy Spirit-God working in us so that we might be joined to the death and the resurrection of the Son; God working in us in the Spirit so that we might hear that it was the loving will of the Father to send his only beloved Son to love back those who by their very thoughts, words, and deeds still live as God's mortal enemies. God working in us so that we might see past the God of this world that blinds us. That we might see clearly how greatly the Father loves the Son and all God's children that God's Son died to bring into the community with our heavenly father.

The Holy Spirit uses preaching, baptismal font, and holy communion as a way to get the cross and resurrection of Christ into our very lives, the heart of the Father into our very hearts, the obedience of

Christ into our very hands and feet, to transform our DNA from selfishness to giving away our lives that others might have life.

It is divine spirit invading body and soul; it's the means of grace is a radiation treatment killing the old proud cancerous mortal Adam, still wanting to be God.

The dogmas of the Trinity should not be about splitting hairs, but about splitting Adams, the old Adam from the new Adam, Jesus Christ.

Because faith isn't meant to be a mental game, it's really meant to be a change of the heart

And the emphasis is on that change happening RIGHT NOW. Because the Holy Spirit always makes the gospel happen *now* and forwards the faith in hope.

So that hymn that we sing at Holy Communion "Now the Spirit's visitation, now the Son's epiphany, now the Father's blessing, now, now, now." Paul says now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation.

The Sunday of Holy Trinity is about a gospel that we don't have to speak; it's about a gospel we want to speak. We just gotta speak.

As Augustine wrote:

"The true objects of our enjoyment, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are at the same time the Trinity, one Being, supreme above all, and common to all who enjoy Him. So meditate upon this, he wrote, 'Knowledge puffs up, love builds up.'"

Gregory of Nazianus, one of the key theologians of the Trinity from the 4th century wrote this:

"Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God's for His sake, since He for ours became us. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better; He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich; He took upon Him the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; He came down that we might be exalted; He was tempted that we might conquer; He was dishonored that He might glorify us; He died that He might save us; He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were lying low in the Fall of sin. Let us give *all*, offer *all*, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and a Reconciliation for us.

I adore the Father, I adore the Son I adore the Holy Spirit. I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the Undivided Light."

You see, the Great Illumination!

Let us become like Christ, let us get on the ball, willingly entering into the lives of those who need good news, being the loving will of God to others, that God might unleash the welcoming power of God's love upon another, through you. I call that Forwarding Faith.

By eleven this morning, we will have elected a new bishop for the Virginia Synod, who will take office in September. Let us pray this for our new bishop-elect and for every one of us, entering this new day as God's servant, "Keep your eye on the cross."