

Have you ever gotten to know someone and then met their parents later on? Kind of interesting, isn't it? It's always intriguing to see where someone's physical traits and mannerisms come from. Sometimes it's hard to see a resemblance, but other times, it couldn't be more obvious.

Today is Trinity Sunday, and Trinity Sunday is a peculiar special day, in this sense: all the other church year festivals center on an *event* from the Biblical record. For example, last week was the Day of Pentecost, which was a historical *event* in the life of the Church. We can talk about who was there and what happened—the apostles were overcome by the Holy Spirit and started preaching in languages they had never learned. Go through the church year and you'll see the pattern. Christmas—Jesus is born in a stable. Lent and Holy Week, we trace the path to the cross and empty tomb. Ascension Day is self-explanatory. But Trinity Sunday? Trinity Sunday is the only Festival Day on which we just talk about something that exists. Or more precisely, *Someone* who is, was, and always will be. We talk about God on this peculiar day, and we talk about God's peculiar nature as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now, Christian thinkers of every era have written countless volumes about the three-in-one nature of God and have attempted to explore the depths of this mystery. I'm not going to even try to trace the history of those thoughts with you, but what I do want you to see is this: In the same way that you can see a resemblance between a parent and a child; in an infinitely better way you can get to know the Almighty God by getting to know his Son, Jesus. And you have help; the partner in this getting-to-know-God process is the Holy Spirit.

So, allow yourself for the next few minutes to simply honor and worship the Holy Trinity. Let yourself be raised up from your current situation into the mystery of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Let yourself realize that all things are passing away quickly; that you are being swept by time into the majesty that is God Himself.

The message of the Bible is this: God reveals Himself as the Father of Jesus Christ and, by Jesus, the Spirit of God is released into the world, who makes us acceptable to God by baptism and faith. Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit takes everything that belongs to God and makes it yours. We can't really comprehend it all, but behind this gift is a Father and Son unlike any other. Their Spirit is still actively searching for people to love.

This is how the apostle Peter said it on Pentecost: "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing."

It's been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, the picture that I want to share with you this morning is the picture that is on my cross. It would be hard for you to see it from where you're sitting, so we put it on the slide that's being projected on the screen. The picture on my cross is based on a painting that was completed before the year 1000 A.D. It's a

picture of the crucifixion of Jesus, and just in the background is the figure of God the Father, with outstretched arms, holding up the arms of His Son. This is my favorite cross to wear and probably my favorite piece of Christian artwork. It says it all. It was Jesus who died, but it was the Father of our Lord who gave him to die instead of us.

Not too many years ago, the pastor of a large church in the northwest suburbs of Chicago told Peter Jennings in an ABC Special that he did not want the cross in his church, since, after all, the cross is only one symbol among many legitimate Christian symbols. I respectfully disagree. The cross is what Christianity is all about. Without the cross, I cannot know anything helpful about God. In the cross, I not only see the man Jesus innocently put to death, but in the cross I see the heart of a God who is not just my creator but also my redeemer; in the cross I see a God who would break His own heart to salvage mine.

The mystery of the Trinity is completed by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and right here on my cross, on which God the Father is holding up the outstretched arms of his crucified Son, there is a dove above the head of the Father. You may not even notice it at first. But the artist has put into one image what would take an author pages and pages. The crucifixion of Jesus is the true celebration of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit comes from God, but that throne is not found in the heights of heaven, out of sight, out of mind. Jesus' throne is the cross, set right in the middle of sinful humanity. From the throne of his cross, Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." From that cross we have learned to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." From that cross, Jesus grants us the Father's forgiveness and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we forgive those who sin against us.

Trinity Sunday is really and finally a matter of identity. The person who trusts in the God revealed at the cross becomes like Jesus in mercy and kindness. The person whose heart is broken open by the sight of the Father holding up his Son's arms begins to share in that unstoppable love. Look at the lengths to which God has gone in order to gain you. In what way will you say "thank you" to Him?