

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Trinity Sunday

Trinity Sunday

Knights of Columbus State Deputies' Meeting

New Haven, CT

June 11, 2017

Not a day goes by without our making the sign of the Cross, without our praying the Our Father or asking Christ to be near us, or without our seeking the inspiration and strength of the Holy Spirit. We wholeheartedly accept in faith the doctrine of the Trinity, the Church's most important and most central teaching: One God in Three Persons.

Yet, isn't it strange that, when anyone speaks at length about this Mystery - the mystery of God's inner life and love revealed in human history - our eyes tend to glaze over. It can all sound so dry, so theoretical, so far removed from us. And please allow me to let you in on a trade secret. Homilists often commiserate with one another on Trinity Sunday. "It's so hard to preach about!" they often say.

Well, we, the family of the Knights of Columbus, have an advantage on Trinity Sunday. It's not that a brother Knight has figured out the mystery of the Trinity or that your chaplain claims any insight into the Trinity beyond the Church's teaching. No, this Trinity Sunday our advantage comes to us courtesy of Father McGivney and the wonderful Gospel principles and virtues, he left us, namely, charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. The doctrine of the Trinity helps us to understand the principles of the Order; and the principles of the Order help us to grasp more fully the doctrine of the Trinity. So now that you know where we're headed, buckle your seatbelts and let's be on our way!

Let us begin, as always we do, with charity. What does Scripture say of God? "God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him" (1 Jn. 4:16). What else does Scripture tell us? "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life" (Jn.

3:16).

God is love . . . *from* all eternity and *for* all eternity . . . God is love: The Father is the lover; the Son is the beloved; the love they share is the Holy Spirit. What's more, the love at the heart of the Trinity is not a needy or self-seeking love, but rather a love that is utterly generous, self-giving, and passionate. Indeed, the glory of God is not silver or gold or jewels, but the blinding light and unspeakable goodness of Triune love. . . that divine love who has no need of anyone or anything else, yet chose to create the world so that you and I could share that love. And so the Gospel tells us, God so loved the world that he sent his Son . . . the Father sent his Son who was born of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit so that the hardest, coldest, most sin-ridden heart might be saved, so that divine love might reach earth's most desolate places.

Where, then, does our charity as Knights of Columbus come from? For example, coats for kids? outreach to wounded warriors? aid to disaster victims? assistance to fellow Christians in the Middle East who are suffering so terribly?

We share not merely our own resources . . . no, we are intent on sharing the Father's love revealed by Christ crucified and poured into our hearts by the Spirit!

Let's move to the principle of unity. Our faith teaches us the truth that there is only *One* God. In the Preface of this Mass we will pray these words: "You are one God, one Lord, not in the unity of a single person but in a Trinity of one substance."

God's oneness is not a mere consensus among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nor are the words, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, just three names for the One God, or three guises or three masks by which the One God appears to us in human history. There really is only One God in Three (real) Persons. And as we have already seen, love is the very substance or nature of God. To repeat, God the Father is the lover; God the Son is the beloved; and God the Holy Spirit is bond of love that they share. So intense is the unity of these three Persons that they do not constitute three gods but rather, they subsist as Three Real Relations in the One God . . .

So, in revealing the Father's love on earth, what did Christ pray for? "That *we* be one as he is one with the Father . . . so that the world would believe." And what did

Christ do? He died on the cross, as Paul says, making peace by the blood of his Cross. Thus we are called in baptism to be “one body, one spirit, in Christ.”

Where, then, is the source of our unity as members of the Knights of Columbus? Is it merely our own good will and sincerity, important as these are? Rather, does not our unity come from a higher source? St. Paul says as much to us today in our second reading and I quote: “Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.” Unity is grace, a gift, a baptismal call to share God’s inner life and love, so when we strive intentionally to keep our state jurisdictions and our councils united in faith and united in charity, united in growing the Order . . . we are relying, utterly, on the intense unity of love that is the Blessed Trinity.

We now move to the principle and virtue of fraternity. Of course, I’d be mistaken were I to describe the Trinity as a fraternal organization, three persons that share a common cause and common interests. Yet the source of our fraternity as the family of the Knights of Columbus may be said to derive from the uniqueness of the Three Persons of the Trinity. To repeat, the Three Persons of the Trinity are Real Relations: the Father is not Son, nor is the Son the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son, yet there is only one God ever to be adored.

Yet, in the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son share a fellowship so intense and so beautiful no words can adequately describe it.

Our fraternity – our care for one another and for our families –our common purpose of strengthening one another in the Faith –our common determination to serve the needs of one and all –our readiness to come to one another’s aid in time of distress –our respect for one another in all our legitimate differences and diversity –this bond of fraternity has its source in the unity of the Three Persons of the Trinity. St. Paul, in a passage very familiar to us all, sums this up today: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the *fellowship* of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

And what to say of our fourth principle and virtue, that is, patriotism? Patriotism is love of one’s homeland yet our true native land is to be with God, to share in, to the fullest extent of our being, the utter happiness of Triune love. After all, we have been created by Divine Love so that we might love in that self-giving way, that *heavenly*

way, that Christ outlined in the Beatitudes. The more we enter into the love of the Trinity the better equipped we are to love others as Christ loves them, and thus to love even our earthly home with a sacrificial love. And the more we love our neighbor as Christ loves our neighbor, the more suited we are one day to be fully members of the Kingdom of Heaven -to join the ranks of saints and angels who behold in perfect love the vision glorious -One God in Three Persons!

As leaders of the family of the Knights of Columbus may we now acknowledge the doctrine of the Trinity as we pray together: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Vivat Jesus!