

Dedication of Parish Center, St. Joseph, Eldersburg

Introduction

I'm happy for the opportunity, at long last, to offer Mass here at St. Joseph's Parish and to bless the new parish center dedicated to formation and fellowship. Let me also join with you in thanking Father Neville O'Donohue for his effective and dedicated leadership as your pastor! Let me also take a moment to thank Father Paul Reich who has served in the Archdiocese of Baltimore for nearly 30 years and has contributed so greatly to life and vitality of this parish! At the same time, I want to greet Father David McGuigan and Father John Worgul, and to thank the Society of Mary for its commitment to this parish family. This is also a moment for me to greet my brother deacons, and to thank the dedicated lay leadership of the parish, the parish staff together with those involved in various parish ministries.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

My visit takes place on Trinity Sunday, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, to give the feast its proper title. On Trinity Sunday, we listen to the Scripture readings and the prayers at Mass which speak to us of the mystery of the Trinity. When we stop and think about the Trinity, however, we may be tempted to reduce this mystery to a puzzle or a riddle that has little to do with our daily lives and our life of faith.

Yet, the God of Jesus Christ is utterly Trinitarian. We can't follow Jesus without keeping before our mind and heart the truth of the One God in Three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This truth illuminates and shapes the entire faith of the Church - all that the Church believes and teaches, how worship as a community of faith, how we envision morality and service to others, how we grow in

private prayer.

So where to start? Let's begin with the truth that "God is love". God is not an isolated, benign dictator, a sort of heavenly Wizard of Oz. Rather, the One God is more like a family, a communion of Three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From all eternity, the Father pronounced the Word, his One Word, his eternal divine Son who perfectly reflects all that the Father is. And the bond of love between the Father and the Son is not merely a long-standing friendship or an enduring good feeling. No, the bond of love between the Father and the Son is a Divine Person, the 3rd Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit. God is love: an eternal communion of truth and love.

What's more, God is love not only within himself but also for us. It was in love that God created us and with still greater love that he redeemed us. As Scripture says, 'God so loved the world that he sent his Son into the world.' His Son took flesh in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. He assumed our humanity, bore our burdens, and nailed them to the Cross. In our humanity, he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, giving our redeemed human nature a place at the right hand of the Father. At Pentecost, the Father with the Son sent the Holy Spirit upon the Church so that we might open our hearts to the Gospel and live as his disciples and friends.

And it is in and through the Church, her teaching and her worship, that we are invited to enter into the inner life of this communion of persons, the perfect peace, the perfect joy, the self-giving love of the Trinity. In fact, St. Cyprian of Carthage (who lived in the 3rd century) wrote that the Church is a unity modeled on and rooted in the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (cf. LG, № 4). So the Church doesn't merely speak about the doctrine of the Trinity; nor does she merely point to this mystery from afar. No, the Church draws her life from the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Formed in the image and likeness of the Trinity,

the Church gathers us in so that we may share in God's own truth, life, and love. Overshadowed by the Spirit, she brings forth Christ and his redeeming love so that we may be cleansed of our sins and lives as the adopted children of God.

The Trinity and the New Formation Center

In light of the today's celebration of the Most Holy Trinity we can understand more deeply the importance of the new parish center as a place of formation and fellowship.

Christian formation is a life-time prospect. It has many avenues, many highways and byways. Yet at its root, Christian formation is not merely learning about Jesus, nor is it merely a question of learning Gospel values. Rather, Christian formation is all about our entering—body, mind, and spirit— into the redeeming presence of Christ who leads us to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Formation is about inviting the Holy Spirit to infuse every aspect of our personal lives and every aspect of parish life with the truth and love of Christ who sits exalted at the right hand of the Father. Formation means welcoming the presence of the Trinity into our inmost selves, so that the image of Christ, the Christ of the Beatitudes, might take shape there. Thus each parishioner contributes to forming a parish community of disciples, or to use the phrase of Pope Francis, “missionary disciples” - followers of Jesus who respond to the great commission Jesus gave his Church: “Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This means bearing witness to Christ in our daily lives and looking for every opportunity to invite those who have left to return to the faith and to reach out to those who are searching for authentic truth and love.

But what is it that we invite them to? Here the second purpose of the new parish center comes into view. We evangelize not just to increase Mass attendance but rather to be the Lord's co-workers in gathering his people into a fellowship, a communion of truth, life, and love modeled on and sharing in the life of the Trinity:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A humanity of a parish community - its friendliness and openness - is to be a sign of that deeper and more beautiful friendship and communion we enjoy because of our sacramental union with the Holy Trinity.

Conclusion

Dear friends, on this day of grace and joy, let us pledge ourselves anew to the task of formation and the joy of fellowship so as to foster the unity and vitality of this wonderful parish. May I invite you now to acknowledge the Most Holy Trinity from whom we came and towards whom we journey, as together, we say: "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."