

Installation of Fr. Michael DeAscanis, Pastor, St. Philip Neri Church

Introduction

It is a special joy to install Father Michael DeAscanis as the pastor here at St. Philip Neri Parish. Already you have experienced his fidelity, dedication, and pastoral love. He is working closely with you in offering that leadership which is so necessary for a parish to be united and to fulfill its mission. This afternoon, I warmly greet members of Father DeAscanis' family, in a special way, his dear mother, Mary Patricia, who has joined us. Let me also greet parishioners from previous parishes where Fr. DeAscanis served, as well as his associates and co-workers in the Vocations Office.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

Fr. DeAscanis' installation as pastor 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. Sometimes, 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 we 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, 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 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 bosom of the Trinity, 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 live as the adopted children of God.

The Trinity and the Pastor

Indeed, this is a pastor's first responsibility: to lead those entrusted to his care to live the life of Christ - not just to know about Jesus, not just to learn Gospel values, but to enter body, mind, and soul into the redeeming presence of Christ who leads us to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The Pastor's ministry is all about invite the Holy Spirit to infuse every aspect of parish life with the truth and love of Christ, who sits exalted at the right hand of the Father. The Pastor and his co-workers assist individual parishioners in welcoming the presence of the Trinity into the inmost selves, into their heart, so that the image of Christ, the Christ of the Beatitudes, might take shape there. Thus the Pastor seeks to help each parishioner contribute to forming of a parish community of disciples, modeled on and rooted in the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The job description of a pastor is endless but if we tried to reduce his role to an itemized list, we'd miss the forest for the trees. To be sure the Pastor is responsible for the resources of the parish but not for the sake of running a successful business. Rather, working with his staff and lay leaders, he gathers up all of God's gifts both divine and human and marshals them for the sake of the mission that Christ entrusted to his Church: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!" Leading you to share more and more deeply the life of the Blessed Trinity, your pastor and his co-workers continuously work to form a parish of evangelizes: men, women, young people who continually grow in your friendship with Christ and bring the Gospel into your homes, your circle of friends, your places of work. Through your words and witness that we seek out those who have left the Church for whatever reason and

seek to attract all those who are searching for authentic love.

Conclusion

Dear friends, pledging ourselves to unite with Fr. DeAscanis, the parish staff, and lay leadership in fostering the unity and vitality of this parish of St. Philip Neri, 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.”