

“To Know Him” (Homily)

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June 11, 2017 – Trinity Sunday

(Lectionary: 164; Ex 34:4B-6, 8-9; Dn 3:52-55; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Jn 3:16-18)

Today, we celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity—the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the foundation of all that is—the very *essence* of Christianity.

Now, as we all know, the Most Holy Trinity is a great *mystery*. In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, “The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the *central* mystery of Christian faith and life.” The mystery of *all* mysteries! Remote, unintelligible, and deceptively simple. In fact, the dogma of the Trinity may be reduced to one sentence: *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is each God, and they are not the same, but there is only one God.*

Does this seem logical to you? I hope not, because the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity defies human logic. Indeed, a mystery is a mystery because it cannot be understood.

But I put it to you: mysteries can be *known*. As my beloved Baltimore Catechism reminds me, “God made me *to know Him*,” not to understand Him, but *to know Him* as one, unified community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, sometimes with the Father acting foremost, and sometimes the Son, and sometimes the Holy Spirit, but always united, always acting *in love*, and *with love*, and *for love*.

The knowledge of which the Catechism speaks is *intimate*. Where do we seek it? Surely, not in theology texts! Definitely not! Rather, *intimate* knowledge is sought in relationships, and in poetry, song, and story. So, we seek the Trinity in prayer, and in worship, and in the stories of the Bible, and in our own memories—our own stories—of family, parish, comrades and friends.

For me, all these things seem to mix—prayer and Scripture and memory—and so it was natural, I guess, that a sweet memory came to me the other night, as I prayed over a passage from Saint Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

I remembered a little family, 64 years ago, father, mother, and my first friend, Naomi—a family brimming with so much love that I can still feel it, after the passage of all these years. Naomi’s father was a doctor. Her mother was a housewife. Naomi and I were three years old, going on four, when we met. I relished the time I spent with my little friend, and her loving mother, and, during those times when he could get away from his medical practice, her loving father. The affection in Naomi’s family was palpable. When her father arrived home, the embraces and kisses and smiles were like heaven to me. Even my *own* hair got tussled in these affectionate melees. And in observing the love of this family, and receiving it, I came to know the gifts about which Saint Paul wrote: the love of the Father who provides, the love of the Son who sacrifices, the love of the Holy Spirit, who accompanies and guides.

Now, the love of Naomi’s family was so tight, that I cannot tell you which of the three provided more, or sacrificed more, or was a better friend. For it was not only Naomi’s father who

provided a safe place to play, and snack upon snack in the cupboard, but her mother, as well, who provided smiles and hugs, and Naomi, who provided hours of laughs and make-believe. In like manner, it was not only her mother who sacrificed her time, zealously watching us and correcting us, but Naomi, as well, who graciously shared her pets and toys, and her father, too, who set aside most of a day, long ago, to bring me to the hospital, when my arm just bled and bled. And again, it was not only Naomi who provided me with fellowship, but her mother, who's soft voice I remember to this day, and her father, who tussled my hair and stood right there with me, as Dr. Doane stitched up my elbow. Father, mother, and daughter, *distinct* persons with *distinct* roles in my life, and yet so *united* in love, and with love, and for love, that they seemed to be of one spirit, one heart, one soul.

You may ask, “Do I *understand* the Trinity when my mind returns to Naomi's home? Is the analogy between her family and the Trinity *that* close?” Of course not! Nevertheless, I *know* something of the Trinity when I reflect on the loving ways of this little group. And I can *use* this knowledge (as distinct from formal understanding) to guide *my* contributions to family and parish and the Church at large. In fact, as a Christian, I *must* do so. I *must* use my knowledge of the Trinity to strengthen *my* presence in these essential communities. I *must* ask, “Are *my* essential communities (*my* family, *my* parish, and *my* Church), though diverse in gifts and responsibilities, *united in love*? What can *I* do to build this Trinitarian vision? *Must I provide more*—like the Father? *Must I sacrifice more*—like the Son? *Must I be a better friend and guide to all I meet*—like the Holy Spirit?”

I, for one, bring these questions to prayer, and I would beg you to do the same.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you, now and forever. Amen.