June 7, 2020: Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

One year when my family was on vacation with Phyllis MacDonald (my Mom’s friend) and her family up in New Brunswick, we were staying at Lake Magaguadavic. It was a somewhat isolated area and so at night it would get very dark. There was not a lot of light pollution, hence you could really see the stars. At night the sky was truly ablaze with what seemed like millions and millions of small lights. The night sky was something you could sit and marvel at and never really get bored. We rented two cabins on the beach and let’s just say there were more people than the cabins could comfortably accommodate for sleeping. Therefore, most nights when it did not rain, we slept right on the beach. It was pretty awesome.

One night Phyllis’ niece, Kathy, woke up to see the sky ablaze with color. As you looked up you saw pink, green, yellow, blue, violet, and so forth stretching across the horizon. It was a truly amazing sight to behold, but Kathy had no idea what was happening. When she saw all the different colors, she started screaming at the top of her lungs that the world was ending. She ran into the cabin and woke everyone up, as she had already done to those on the beach.

After Phyllis got her calmed down, people explained to her that it was Aurora Borealis (or the Northern Lights). She had not heard of them but once she understood what it was, she was in awe of what she was seeing. After everyone had a good laugh, her attitude completely changed. When she understood what was happening, her fear changed into awe and joy at this unusual experience.

I think this can happen so often in our faith life. There is so much about our faith that we do not fully understand or appreciate. Our faith can at times seem arcane and truly convoluted. How often I will hear people say, “I am spiritual but not religious.” The response I want to give is, “Well, I’m both.” I think there is a negative connotation to the concept of religion because it comes across as big and complicated. Religion is seen as driven by rules and fear. ‘If you do X, then you go to hell.’ ‘If you don’t do Y, then you go to hell.’ The whole thing that seems to drive this concept is that Religion controls our basest drives, to try and make us better moral or ethical beings. Religion is about how it makes us feel, and so, if it doesn't make you feel good, or if it creates ‘negative’ feelings, then you’re better off without it.

The reality is, of course, very different. Our faith is not about rules. It is not about getting every theological concept down. It is not about being able to answer every question on the test. Rather, our faith is far less complicated. But, far more difficult!

It is about having a true relationship with God, not on our terms but on His. As I look at the progression of my relationship with God through the years, it has been a truly amazing journey. When I was child, did I understand my faith as I do now? Not a chance! But what I knew about it was enough: God is always with me and He loves me. I recognized also that I owed God obedience, but not because I was afraid of what might happen if I didn’t do what He called me to. Rather, it was about my desire to love Him. I recognized that God knows better than I do, and so I had to simply put my trust in Him. It was not always easy, nor have I always made the correct choice, but it always comes back to the truth that God loves me—no matter what.

As I have traveled along my journey of faith, the reality is that, at times, it’s been scary. At times I have felt like Kathy. I did not understand what was happening: it was like looking at the sky and seeing colors that did not make sense. Generally, these were the moments God was calling me out of my comfort zone and challenging me to grow towards being the person He created me to be, rather than the person I had become because of poor decisions. God was calling me to reject the sin and brokenness in my life, to embrace the reality of who I truly am. God calls us in those moments, to allow Him to break down the barriers and walls we have created, to protect ourselves from the world and, honestly, from ourselves.

We have a tendency of trying to see ourselves in a particular way, and that is how we want the world to see us. But the problem is that God sees the truth of us. He recognizes what we have fabricated and seeks to tear it all down. But we can become very afraid of what it is that we will see in ourselves. Therefore, we work diligently at trying to prevent that from happening. We allow fear to prevent God’s grace from helping us to grow in a real relationship with Him. We allow it to remain ‘all about me’.
The truth of the matter is that when I have let go of the fear of what I, and others, might see, God has done some pretty amazing things in my life. It is in those moments that I have come to discover more about God and, in the process, more about myself. It can be painful not because of what God is doing, but because of the choices I can make to stop it from happening.

It is a matter of looking at the sky, seeing an amazing sight, and realizing what it is that is happening. Are you ready to let go of the fear and see the truth of who you are in the eyes of God. He is doing something amazing in your life, and the only question is, do you really understand what it is?

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian