

June 7, 2020      St. Augustine Cathedral    11:30 a.m.

### **Solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity**

Over these last two months in our Liturgical Calendar, we have been “feasting” on Easter, these 50 days which included Easter itself, the Feast of Jesus’ Ascension, and last Sunday’s great Solemnity of Pentecost. We celebrate Easter with such joy and for so long because Jesus’ Resurrection and His Victory over sin and death is the greatest Event in Salvation History. And of course, Jesus didn’t win that Victory for Himself---but rather for us! Because of Easter, we, who are sinners, live in this imperfect but beautiful world with Hope that when our lives in this world are completed, our lives will continue. Jesus’ Victory changed human death from a closed door ending, to a doorway into a new beginning---the next, and unending, part of our lives. Because of Easter, when we, or someone we know and love, dies, we can be confident that Life continues with God forever in Heaven.

As we are gathered together here this morning, we, and our entire diocesan Family of Faith, mourn the death of our beloved Bishop James Murray---one whom we have known, loved, and admired; one from whom we have learned about our Faith and been led in the ways of Faith during his nearly 12 years as the third Bishop of our beloved Diocese; one who was a regular and welcome part of the Cathedral Parish Masses and parish life; and one whom I loved and respected as an older brother Bishop, and especially as my predecessor. But Easter assures us that even in our sadness, we should be filled with joy for Bishop Murray because we trust that when God called Him Home early Thursday morning, he immediately was welcomed into the Arms of our Loving God. (I’ll say a bit more about Bishop Murray’s Funeral arrangements before the Final Blessing at this Mass.) But let us pray for our dear Bishop Murray in a special way during this Mass, asking our loving God: *Eternal rest grant unto Bishop Murray, Oh Lord, and let Your perpetual Light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.*

Even though the Easter Season ended with the great Feast of Pentecost last week, and we have returned to the Ordinary Time of the Year, today we celebrate another very special Feast, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. But today we don’t celebrate a *Sacred Event*---like Easter, the Ascension or Pentecost; but rather a *Sacred Identity*---the very Identity of God. Or to put it another way, our celebration today is not about a “what”, but rather a “Who”---it’s about the very Nature of God! From our earliest days of religion or CCD classes, we have learned

that we believe in One God, not multiple gods like pagans do. That's how we start out the Creed every Sunday: "I believe in One God". But we also believe that our One God is a Trinity---that there are 3 Persons in the One God, Whose Names are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit---that they are equal but different; that they each have their own particular role, and yet they live in perfect harmony and share eternal Love. We believe in a God Whose Fatherhood loves us unconditionally; Whose Sonship saves us and wins Eternal Life for us; and Whose very Spirit enlivens us with the Life of God Himself.

Now, I have to tell you very honestly, that in many ways, I dread this Feast when it comes around every year because for some reason, I convince myself that this year, I'll figure out a way to explain the Trinity in such a way that it will be perfectly understandable. Well, not only has that never happened (nor will it ever happen), but all that happens is I give myself a headache trying to do so! There have been Saints, Theologians, and the best minds in the history of the Church who dedicated their lives to trying to do that, including St. Patrick's famous "Shamrock" analogy, and our own St. Augustine, who wrote volumes on the Trinity. We use words like "Transcendent", "Imminent", "Consubstantial", but in the end, there's only one conclusion: that God is incomprehensible. The Trinity is a Mystery of our Faith; no amount of study or research will get us beyond that limitation of our human understanding.

Now, in the face of any mystery, our human mind naturally wants to unravel it--to figure it out; to analyze; to understand. Consider the Corona Virus---it's really a "mystery" to scientists throughout the world. It's even called a "novel" virus---it's not one that the world has experienced before. And even though the best minds in the world are doing research and around-the-clock studies trying to figure out what makes it tick so that it can be conquered, and to find a vaccine to contain it or even destroy it, that has still not taken place. And that's a mystery that CAN be figured out, and one day will.

But God doesn't want us to see Him as a virus to be conquered, a math problem to be solved, or an equation to be learned. God isn't a Mystery to be figured out, but rather One to be embraced and loved. Our God created us, knows us, and loves us, and in turn, wants us to come to know, Love and serve Him.

We just heard three beautiful Scripture Readings, which gave us powerful insights into Who God is. Even though today's Feast focuses us on the Mystery of God, each of today's Readings are brief, beautiful and profound.

In today's first Reading from the Book of Exodus, Moses goes up the Mountain, and God came down from Heaven in a cloud to encounter him there. Of all the messages that God could have delivered, what did He reveal about Himself? There were two important messages. The first is: *"I am the Lord, the Lord..."* Perhaps that's the most important message we need to hear: God is God and we are not! There's something inherent in our human nature (which of course we attribute to Original Sin) that makes us think that we should be our own God, and it rubs us the wrong way when someone, including God, tells us what we can and can't do. Isn't that the very definition of sin? Refusing to follow God's commands because what I want to do seems better/more pleasurable/more convenient/easier/ etc. etc. So, first of all, God tells us that He is the Lord, and we are His People. But the second message is equally important. He says: I am *"a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity."* In other words, He knows that we will resist obeying Him, and instead of punishing us, or rejecting us, or condemning us, He promises to be merciful and gracious to us. Wow! In response, Moses pleaded with the Lord to *"come along in our company"*, and from that moment on, God has always been a God with us, and never apart from or against us.

In our Second Reading, St. Paul's words provide us with the greeting that we oftentimes use at the beginning of each Mass: May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." In using that greeting, St. Paul is describing the qualities of the 3 Persons: that the Father is "Love", that the Son is full of "Grace", and that the Spirit provides fellowship and unity among them.

In today's Gospel passage, one that is so familiar to us, Jesus tells us that God not only "comes along with us", but God *"gave His only Son"* to be one of us. That is the very summary of Who God is, and what the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus is all about: God loves His world, and God loves His creation---you and me. God IS Love.

For some reason, in spite of all the ways God has revealed Himself to us as a God of Love, humanity tends to think of God as a God Who is out to get us---as a God Who can't wait for us to mess up or make a mistake or commit a sin, and

then He can punish us----as a God Who is aloof, distant, uninvolved with our lives or our world. NONE of that is even a little bit true; in fact, it's all just the opposite. Listen again to what Jesus tells us today in that brief Gospel passage: *"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."* God is not about condemning, punishing, or rejecting. God only wants to be One with us, and He wants us to be One with Him.

That is Who God is: a Trinity of Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, living in perfect Love and Harmony with one another. And Jesus has come to teach us that as God lives in communion within Himself, so too does He want us to live with God, but also to live with one another in that same kind of unity, fellowship and love.

And that's why St. Paul urged the Corinthians, and us, in our Second Reading, to *"mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you."*

My dear friends, as we all are painfully aware, we're living in a very tumultuous, anxious, and greatly divided time in our country, including here in our local community. Tensions are high, anger is great, peaceful protests against racism and social injustice are widespread, and sadly much of those protests have turned violent, and destructive, including here in our own community. St. Paul's words could not be more appropriate as to what we all need to do. What is happening here is unacceptable and wrong on many levels, especially at our Faith level, and what today's Feast is all about. God is God. And God created all human beings----who are made in the image and likeness of God, who are equal in the sight of God, and Whom God sent His Son into the world to bring salvation to all human beings. And we human beings must love God, and one another. And so, to go back to St. Paul's words, we must *mend our ways, encourage one another, find a way to agree with one another, so that we can live in peace.* We can't ignore what divides us; we must resolve what divides us in a way that respects the dignity of every person, and that acknowledges our dependence on God.

We can at the very least consider making 3 resolutions on this Feast of the Most Holy Trinity: to pray, to engage in dialogue, and to actively participate in advancing Jesus' Kingdom here among us. 1) Prayer: we need to pray for peace. We need to pray that each of us can be peace-makers, in the example of Jesus, and not contribute to divisions in our primary relationships, as well as in all our

other social and work relationships. 2) We can engage in dialogue: That seems to be a lost art these days. There is very little dialogue, just a lot of demands. There is no conversation, only proclaiming one-sided opinions. We need to understand one another, and the only way that can take place is through dialogue--- exchanging ideas--- understanding what has led to such animosity and tension so that peaceful solutions can be found. 3) And finally we need to actively participate in building up the Kingdom that Jesus announced: “The Kingdom of God is at hand”. Every time we pray the Our Father, and pray “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”, that’s what we’re meaning. That as God lives together in perfect harmony and unity as the Trinity of Persons, so too are we committed to finding ways to keep building that Kingdom here on earth, through practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, through works of charitable outreach to those who are in need, and through practicing patience and understanding with all that we encounter.

On this beautiful Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, we must accept the fact that we will never understand God, or figure out the Mystery of God. But, thanks be to God, God knows us--- loves us— and remains with us always in His Word, in the Sacraments, and in the Church.

May we thank God and give Him our glory and praise in all that we say and do in our lives, as we pray *“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.*