

My friends in Christ, today, we give honor to the Most Holy Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We do well, therefore, to try our best to reflect upon – and enter more deeply into – the utter mystery of the Trinity; at the same time, today’s celebration gives us an opportunity *also* to reflect upon that most beautiful of all human relationships, the domestic church; known also as...the family. And very soon, we shall see (I hope) the profound connection between these two forms of relationship: the Trinity and the family.

First, the Trinity. Perhaps the most confounding and frustrating of all the great mysteries of our Christian faith! So much so, in fact, that many a priest have warned me that if ever there were a Sunday to be away from the parish so that someone *else* could preach the homily, it would be Trinity Sunday. And why is it that the Trinity is such a perplexing mystery of faith? Because, simply put, it contradicts absolutely everything that we knew – or *thought* we knew – about the immutable laws of mathematics; one plus one plus one *should* equal three, but where the Holy Trinity is concerned (the Great Three-in-One) one plus one plus one actually equals...one!

So how do we talk about the Trinity? How can we possibly even begin to comprehend this incomprehensible mystery? Well, it seems to me that there are two things that we can try: one, we can talk about the Trinity *via negativa* (by talking about what the Trinity is *not*); and two, we can talk about the Trinity via the use of metaphor.

What the Trinity is *not*. The Trinity (the Great Three-in-One) is perfect unity; which means that this is one God (albeit three Persons); which means that God is *not*, in fact, three gods, for that then would *not* be Christianity; that would be polytheism (“many gods”); but polytheism is a heresy, for God is one, and we believe in one God: monotheism.

What the Trinity is *not*. The Trinity (God) is distinct from Creation; which means that God is *not* part of Creation, and we do *not* just happen to experience God in different ways depending on what part or aspect of Creation we are dealing with; for that would *not* be Christian; it would be that which we call “pantheism” (“all is God”), but that *also* is a heresy, for God is God, totally uncreated Creator; thus, God is wholly distinct from Creation.

What God is *not*. The Trinity is three Persons in one God; which means that God is *not* just one Person who takes on different forms, different modes, as circumstances warrant, for that would be that which we call “modalism,” and that *also* is a heresy, and Sacred Scripture actually defeats this heresy when, for example, Jesus Christ was baptized in the River Jordan: God the *Son* was baptized; God the *Father* spoke (“You are My beloved Son.”); God the *Holy Spirit* descended upon the Son in the form of a dove; and so, all three Persons were present in that one scene, that one moment, and all of them quite distinct from one another, yet all of them one in perfect unity...*somehow*.

It is this *somehow* to which we turn, and for this, we rely on the use of metaphor.

We are all well aware, I am sure, of Saint Patrick’s famous metaphor of the three-leaf clover, how the whole plant is clover, and each leaf is clover, that there are three leaves, each of them alone and all of them together being clover. Very good.

Saint Augustine proposes another metaphor: love; we have the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love that they share. Beautiful.

And so, we have Saint Patrick’s metaphor, and we have Saint Augustine’s metaphor. Dare I myself propose my *own* metaphor? One which, I dare say, rivals those of these two great saints and brilliant minds of the Catholic Christian tradition? Indeed, I *do* dare! (*reveal the trumpet*) Behold! The trumpet metaphor!

- *First, explain the bodily procedure for trumpet-playing: the body at work (lungs, diaphragm, lips); the air that flows; the buzz that sounds*
- *Second, the lip-buzz → Ave Maria*
- *Third, the mouthpiece alone → Ave Maria*
- *Fourth, the whole trumpet → Ave Maria*

Now in this particular metaphor, notice that the whole trumpet-playing process was at work even before I applied the trumpet. It is the whole process of playing the trumpet that is a metaphor for God; what, then, is the trumpet? I propose that the trumpet...is a metaphor for the Church.

Consider, just briefly, another metaphor. God is like radio waves or the wi-fi signal. Yes, it is out there, but we cannot discern *anything* at all, cannot even *begin* to engage or interact or have *any* sort of relationship with it...at least not *until* we can find a way to *harness* it and thus relate with it in

a way that allows us somehow to make sense of it. And so, we have the radio tower; we have those devices that direct wi-fi signals into our computers and smartphones.

That radio tower, those wi-fi devices – they are the Church. God is out there...but it can be so difficult – nay, *impossible* – for us to engage and interact and relate with God unless God provided us with a way to do so. And God *did* do that: God the Son (Jesus Christ) gave us His Church when He suffered and died on the Cross and His Sacred Heart was pierced by the soldier's lance and both water and blood flowed out – the water of Baptism and the blood of the Eucharist. And then, with that first Christian Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon Mother Mary and the Apostles when they were gathered in prayer, descended upon them in the form of tongues as of fire; we celebrated this just last weekend. And thus was the birthday of the Church.

We need towers and devices to plug into the radio waves and wi-fi signals that are already all around us; just so, we need the Church to “plug into” God, Who is all around us...and thanks be to God, God gave us the Church that we so desperately need.

And now, back to the trumpet analogy: the mouthpiece alone...is Baptism. With Baptism, we are cleansed of Original Sin, we are marked as a child of God, we are initiated into the Christian family that is the Catholic Church. With Baptism, we can now *begin* to relate with God.... But wait, there is more! With the whole instrument (the trumpet and the mouthpiece together) we now have the fullness of the sacramental and prayer life of the Church, and we can now fully engage, interact, and relate with God as God wills and wants for us.

So...where exactly does the family come in? How does the *domestic* Church have a role in all of this? I go back to Saint Augustine's metaphor of the Trinity as love: the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love that they share. I would propose that this same metaphor describes perfectly the beautiful fullness of the marital embrace. When the husband and the wife – the lover and the beloved – love each other, the love that they share is so real and full of life that, sometimes, nine months later, you have to give it a name.

And so, there is no better metaphor for God the Holy Trinity than that metaphor which the Lord already has provided for us: the human family. Not the three-leaf clover nor even the *trumpet* is suitable enough to describe the utter mystery that is the Trinity, but only love...and in a *particular* way, the love of the human family.

And so, to conclude, we return to our theme of evangelization. I seriously cannot think of any better, more effective evangelist of Jesus Christ than the family that is happy, healthy, holy; for the family – the *domestic* Church – resides at the very heart of our *parish* church's every endeavor to unleash the Gospel, for the simple reason that the family (hearth and home) is indeed the first and most important setting in which evangelization takes place. Family life is, as it were, a daily liturgy: prayers, sacrifices, acts of love and service, forgiveness, patience and perseverance – and all of that nourished and sustained and utterly transformed by the family's faithful and joyful participation in the sacred liturgy of the *parish* church, the Sacraments. The vital centrality of the family in passing on the Catholic Christian faith from one generation to the next simply cannot be overstated.

For this reason, our *parish* church has been working hard all year long to try to help support and provide for the *domestic* Church, primarily through our Family Faith Formation ministry; and *all* of our parish families (those families with multiple children still at home...those families comprised of a widow or a widower living alone)...*all* parish families need support and provisions, and we will continue to do what we can for precisely this aim and end.

May it be, then, that the Divine Family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...as well as the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph...will nourish us, sustain us, pray for us in our own holy striving as a *parish* family here at Saint Peter and the flourishing of *each* of our families at home who are the domestic Church...for the salvation of all souls and above all else for the greater glory of God.