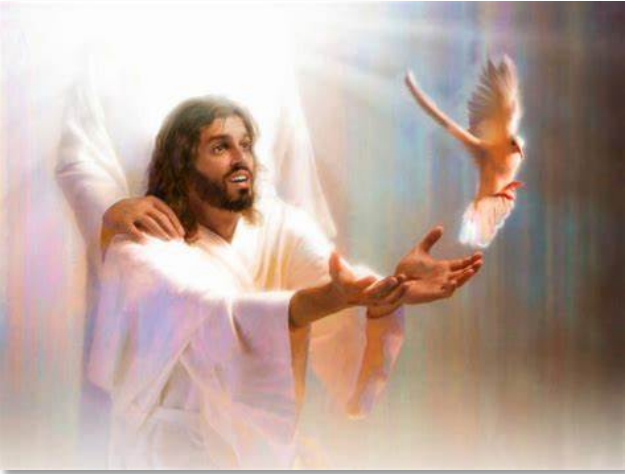


Homily for Sunday, June 4, 2023

There is a part of us that prefers neatly packaged, clearcut answers over and against going on journeys to seek answers. And usually the answers we prefer, if we are honest, are the ones that justify a position we already hold and are not willing to budge from. That way we don't have to change or grow or consider another opinion but just sit in our self-constructed security and always see the world out of the same lens. Jesus never operates that way. Apparently, he is asked 183 questions in the four gospels and gives answers to only three of them. Jesus prefers we journey with good questions that keep moving us forward rather than sitting still with answers that make journeys largely unnecessary.



The Feast of the Holy Trinity is a call to journey into the mystery of God and not simply to try and figure out in our minds how God can be three persons in the one reality. Don't blame it on the "new math," because the Church for 2000 years has said that one plus one plus one equals one, and in this case it is true. The Feast of the Holy Trinity isn't about *how* God exists but about *what* God is like. "How God exists" leads only to heady answers; "what God is like" leads me on a journey of discovery.

When I do a deep dive into what God is like, in view of the Trinity, I conclude that God is ultimately about relationships and about what is highest in me and worth striving for. I can't live without relationships, and I can't live without an ideal to strive for. To put it another way, I can't live on an island by myself, nor can I live where life is drudgery, the same old thing day in and day out.

Let's look at the first one, relationships. I'm more and more convinced that the greatest source of pain in the world comes from broken relationships. There are few feelings worse than the fear of having to endure something without the support of at least one other person. Even if someone can't help me in a particular struggle, just the fact that they know I'm carrying a heavy load seems to make the load much more bearable. Of all the funerals I have presided over in the past 26 years, cancer has been the number one cause of death. A close second is loneliness, although it will never show up on the death certificate. I'm beginning to appreciate Jesus' prayer on the evening before his death, "Father, as I am in you and you are in me, may they all be one." The Trinity is a communion of relationships. It is the pattern for us here on earth and not just for those in heaven. We need to be about building healthy relationship with each other, if for no other reason than the fact that our own mental health depends on it.

Apart from relationships, when I think of Trinity, I think of what all of us should be striving for. We are called to strive for what is highest, most noble, most admirable in us. In Jesus' last words, like I said, he prayed that we all be one. Yet, his first public speech was an invitation for us to identify with our peak, our highest point. In his inaugural speech he said, "You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth."

A story might help us. An acquaintance of mine named Joe Vorsterman, took a year off his normal “job” and worked, instead, with troubled youth in downtown Toronto at a drop-in center called Evergreen. One day, at Evergreen he listened sympathetically to a young man who was kicked out of his home. Joe felt so much empathy for this young man who seemed to have every bad thing possible happen to him. His mother made it clear he was not invited back home. This young man got off to a bad start in life, fell in with the wrong crowd, made some poor decisions, and had lots of doors slammed in his face. Joe felt for him and wondered, as a parent of four children himself, how this mother could be so cold to her own flesh and blood. Then, he visited the mother and heard her story. She was a hardworking single mom working two jobs. She had done her best raising this boy herself. She had given him every opportunity to make something of his life that she, herself, never had. Instead, he stole from her, never listened to her advice, abused her generosity, and made a complete mess of his life through his own poor choices. Joe now felt for the mother and wondered how a child could be so ungrateful and cruel to his own mother.

Neither the mother nor the son could live without each other, but neither of them wanted to live under the conditions of the other. Joe could not help them to find middle ground. Joe kept going back and forth on an imaginary horizontal line, like a negotiator, hoping the two of them could find middle ground. It was hopeless. Out of frustration and sadness, Joe gave up on trying to find middle ground and invited both the mother and the son to do something else; he invited them to seek higher ground.

Picture it as a triangle with mother and the son equally ensconced in the bottom corners of the triangle going nowhere. Joe invited them to consider that each of them were the salt of the earth and light of the world. And as salt of earth and light of the world, what was Jesus calling each of them to? It was an invitation to reach for what was highest in themselves and highest in the other. When they did that, the relationship was repaired, and they started all over again as mother and son. You might say they moved from the bottom of the triangle to the top corner where everything met.

Trinity isn't just a description of who God is, it's also a description of what makes us, us. We are ultimately relational, like God is. And at the center of each of us dwells God calling us to strive to be the best version of ourselves.

Fr. Phil