

Trinity Sunday + 26 May 2024 + Deut 4 + Rom 8 + Mt 28

Today is a unique day on the Liturgical calendar. Throughout the Year, we worship God the Son: at Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi, Christ the King, and so on. We also worship the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We don't worship, but we *honor* the Saints throughout the year too. But today, we simply worship God as God—as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Most Holy Trinity. It's a unique opportunity to praise God simply for Who He is. Hopefully, we often *thank* God for what He has done for us—that is a very important part of the spiritual life. But we also need to *praise* God. Praise is worshipping God because He is God. That too, is a very important, and perhaps often overlooked, part of the spiritual life.

Now speaking of the Most Holy Trinity is not easy. It is not easy to speak meaningfully of One God, three persons. When I was studying the Trinity in the seminary, I always took comfort in a phrase that comes to use from St. Augustine: *si comprehendis, non est Deus*: meaning, *if you understand, it is not God*. Now, that's not to say we can know nothing of God, but rather that God is infinitely above our finite minds, and so we will never completely know Him as He is. And that is good, because if the human mind were to completely understand God, we would be equals to God, and God would not be God.

So what we know of God, we know because God has revealed Himself. He revealed Himself in various ways in the Old Testament: in creation, in the Law of Moses, in the utterances of the Prophets, and so on. But He has revealed Himself most completely in the Son: Jesus Christ. That is why, by the way, most of our Liturgical celebrations of God are focused on the Son—because He most fully reveals God the Father to us. And the Spirit then, is the proof: the Holy Spirit is the advocate in our hearts, giving testimony that the Son has spoken the truth, and reminding us of all the Son has revealed. The Spirit also draws us up, so to speak, into relationship, into the life of the Most Holy Trinity.

Because it's not enough just to know *about* God. I fear some people actually stay at this level of head knowledge only. But when you really love someone, you want more than just knowing about them; you want to be in a relationship with them. And that's what Baptism does. Baptism destroys what keeps us from God—and that is sin—and establishes the bonds of family relationship. That's why we are baptized *in the name* of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We take on His name, we belong to Him. He is now on the hook to take care of us, and we are obligated to obey Him. Think of how this works in a family when a new child is born. The child receives the family name. The parents are obligated to care for this child, and in response the child is obligated to obey the parents. And when this relationship is permeated by love, the word "obligation," which has a negative connotation in our society today, is transformed into a positive word: "blest". Parents are *blessed* to take care of the child, and the child is *blessed* to obey them. This is how families flourish, how children grow up unafraid. And that's how it should be in our relationship with God.

We hear this in our 1st reading today from the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is Moses' farewell speech to the children of Israel on the edge of the Promised Land, reminding them of how they must live in order to fully enjoy the blessings of the Land. In our 1st reading, Moses first reminds the people of how blessed they are indeed that they should have such an intimate relationship with God: they have heard His voice, they have seen His signs and wonders. But if they want to remain in such an exalted relationship with Him, Moses warns them: *you must now know, and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other. You must keep his statutes and commandments that I enjoin on you today. Why? So that, he says, you and your children after you may prosper, and that you may have long life on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever.* As we said, obedience to God leads to untold blessing.

We also hear this truth in our 2nd reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. The gift of our adoption through Baptism, St. Paul says, is that we are now children of God. We know this is true from the voice of the Holy Spirit we now have in us. *And if [we are] children, then [we are] heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.* Yes, if we are one with Christ, then we have to *expect* His Cross in our lives. But we must remember that on the other side of the Cross is glory—the glory of the resurrection, and the glory of eternal life with the Most Holy Trinity.

This teaching also relates to the secular holiday we celebrate this weekend: Memorial Day. Despite what the pundits may say, we are still by and large extraordinarily blessed to live in this nation. And this nation is indeed blessed by God; not because God loves us more than other nations, but because this nation at its foundation enshrined into law many of the *statutes and commandments* that God has given to all people. To the degree that we have kept them in the US, we have been blessed. To the degree that we have forgotten or even rejected them, we have been cursed. Cursed not because God hates us, but because of the inner logic of His creation. If we live in a way opposed to truth, to authentic human flourishing, we can only expect misery. Tragically, I think we seem to be moving more and more in that direction these days as so many people do not know God and His ways.

And that leads us to our Gospel today. Before His ascension, Jesus breathed on His disciples and gave them *power*: His power—the Holy Spirit. And He gave them, and us, His great commission to *go...and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* If we do this, then not just our nation, but all nations will indeed be blessed. If we ignore this commission, things will get worse.

Which brings us finally to recall that today is also our Parish patronal Feast day. Living here in Fowler now for about 11 months, I can see why people want to live in this village of ours, often for their whole lives. It's safe, it's pleasant, and people look out for each other.

But I would suggest that the biggest reason why this village is a great place to call home is because of where we are right now, and what we are doing. I believe that this parish is the soul of this village. And so Moses' words continue to speak to all of us today: if we remain firmly intent on keeping God's statutes and commandments, and if we evangelize, and if we value this more than any material blessing, then God's promise in response to our fidelity—what all of us deep down want in this life more than anything—will remain unbroken: you and your children and grandchildren will prosper and have a long life in this the Land that the Lord our God has given us forever. The choice is ours to make.