

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from the Holy Trinity – the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit – in undivided Unity!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

Happy Trinity Sunday and a blessed Memorial Day weekend as we remember our fallen military who risked everything – *including their own lives* – to preserve our temporal freedom.

On this Trinity Sunday, we confess the very complicated. We confess the triune nature of God. We confess that there is one true God and it is the Holy Trinity.

Over the years, many have taught the Trinity through earthly things, like apples and clovers. The apple is like the Trinity in that it has three parts and yet it is one apple with the peel, the flesh, and the seeds. Clovers are like the Trinity in that it has three leaves and is yet one clover. But even with all the analogies that we have thought of, we cannot fully comprehend the Trinity.

Although the Trinity is hard to understand, this is an essential article of the faith. This is why we confess the Trinity each and every Sunday throughout the Divine Service in the Invocation, in the Introit, in the prayers, in the Creeds, and in the hymns. God has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All other gods are only a figment of human imagination. All other gods are fake and offer nothing. The Islamic false god known as Allah has no power. The Hindu false gods have no power. All earthly “gods” are completely worthless.

The one true God is beyond our human understanding. Unlike all fake gods, the one true God reaches out to us specifically in the Second Person of the Trinity, that is, the Son of God, as He became fully human, so that He could suffer and die for our sins and rise from the grave so that we could be with God in all eternity.

You see, although we may find it hard to understand the Holy Trinity, He is essential to our salvation. It is indeed comforting and reassuring knowing who the true God really is.

As we may give the Persons of the Trinity particular attributes – *such as Creator for God the Father, Redeemer for God the Son, and Sanctifier for God the Holy Spirit* – we must also remember that we cannot separate the Holy Trinity, since the three Persons of the Trinity work together as the one true God. In today’s Second Reading from Acts 2, we hear this perspective in Peter’s Pentecost sermon.

Surprisingly, Peter’s Pentecost sermon is not really about the Holy Spirit – although the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is certainly prominent on that Pentecost Day. Through his preaching, Peter shows us how the Holy Trinity works together to bring about our salvation.

[The Resurrection]

Although the term Holy Trinity is never mentioned in the Scriptures, the Persons of the Trinity are mentioned. Most prominently, Jesus’ Great Commission stands out the most as He says, “***Go therefore 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. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age***” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Peter also proclaims the Holy Trinity in his Pentecost sermon as he says, “***This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing***” (Acts 2:32-33).

Here, Peter is stating the resurrection of Jesus as a fact that can be confirmed by witnesses. Peter’s point is not to establish the fact of the resurrection, but to explain its significance. So, what is the significance of the resurrection?

Since Christ is indeed raised from the dead, we are certain of our salvation. In his Pentecost sermon, Peter said, “***This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it***” (Acts 2:23-24). You see, God the Father sent His Son to bear our sins and be our Savior and the Holy Spirit proclaims our salvation through proclaiming Jesus.

[The Athanasian Creed]

On this Holy Trinity Sunday, we dig deeper into the Triune nature of God. For centuries, humanity has attempted to understand who God is. As creatures created by God, we only know what God has revealed to us through His Scriptures and in nature. Through nature, we can only understand God the Creator.

But through His inspired Scriptures, He reveals so much more! He reveals how we are saved from the power of sin, death, and Satan.

This salvation – *by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone* – is confessed in the Athanasian Creed. Although this Creed does not fully explain the Trinity, it does give us boundary lines. We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Now, this Creed can be hard to fully understand in one reading as it does present complicated words and appears to go in circles with similar phrases throughout. The Athanasian Creed also does often bring up questions, especially with its anathemas. That is, the condemnations at the beginning and end of this Creed. Let's begin with that as we see how this longest Creed proclaims our salvation.

“Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish eternally” and *“This is the catholic faith; whoever does not believe it faithfully and firmly cannot be saved.”* So, what does this mean?

To be short and sweet, it means just that. We must believe in the Holy Trinity in order to be saved. Now, we may not fully understand the Triune nature of God, but we are to trust in Him. This is what this means. This is faith. We are to trust. And in trusting in the Trinity, we are saved. For He is the one true God.

This is what we confess each and every Sunday, but the difference is that the confession of the Athanasian Creed says what we imply in the other Creeds. The point of the Athanasian Creed is that we confess the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. Therefore, there are not three Gods, but one God who is coeternal with each other and coequal.

The doctrine of the Trinity is what Jesus constantly taught. On just a couple of those occasions, Jesus said, **“Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father”** (John 14:9a) and **“I and the Father are one”** (John 10:30). This is Jesus proclaiming the oneness He has with God the Father, just as was said in Deuteronomy 6:4: **“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.”**

So, there is not three Gods, but one God. Through the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, we are saved. Salvation is only found in the Holy Trinity – the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[Trinity in Unity]

Again, Peter's Pentecost sermon is not ultimately about the Holy Spirit, but rather about how the Holy Trinity works together for our salvation.

From Creation as recorded in Genesis through all the millennia, the Holy Trinity was working for our salvation as He inspired the Prophets to proclaim the coming Savior.

In fact, this is what Peter proclaimed from David:

*“I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh will dwell in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
Or let your Holy One see corruption.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
You will make me full of gladness with your presence”* (Acts 2:25-28;
Psalm 16:8-11)

Here, David is not telling of himself, since his flesh saw corruption and died as Peter rightly speaks. Instead, David is writing as a prophet as he foresaw the Christ coming. So, in fact, it is Jesus who is speaking these words from Psalm 16. It is Jesus who is at the right hand of the Father. It is Jesus who will not be abandoned to death. It is Jesus who will not be corrupted by sin. It is Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Spirit who is always before us.

Because Jesus has suffered, died, and rose for our salvation, this makes Him both Lord and Christ. This means that we can recognize that the risen and ascended Jesus is with us. So, our faith is not shaken by all the hardships that we encounter in this life, for David says concerning Jesus: *“I saw the Lord always before me, for He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken”* (Acts 2:25).

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night (John 3:1-17), he thought he was only visiting a great prophet. But Jesus is more than just a prophet. He said to Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit will bring him to know that He is not just a great prophet, but He is the One who descended from the Father. Jesus taught Nicodemus and He continues to teach us that it is the Holy Spirit that brings us to faith in Him, since it is only through Jesus that we are able to enter the Kingdom of God.

So, whatever hardships we encounter – such as spiritual doubt, persecution, peer pressure – Jesus is with us as He offers us comfort as He says, “***Take heart, do not be afraid for I have overcome the world***” (Matthew 14:27, John 16:33).

This means that we can experience joy and hope because of the certainty that God will never abandon us. You see, Jesus’ death on the cross has reconciled us to God by forgiving the sin that separated us from Him. Now, since we have been joined to Jesus in Baptism and since God the Father did not abandon Him, we know He will never leave us in this life and the life to come.

On this Holy Trinity Sunday, Jesus enables us to see the Holy Trinity by Him coming in our flesh as He took away our sin through His death and resurrection. Through Christ alone, we know that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. He brought us to faith through the waters of Holy Baptism. He alone keeps us in the faith through the hearing and study of His Word and through the partaking of Christ’s very Body and Blood under the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, which forgives our sins and strengthens our faith. So, when we see Jesus, we see the Holy Trinity.

We may not fully comprehend the Holy Trinity, but we with the seraphim proclaim the salvation won on the cross through the Triune God proclaiming:

4 *Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!*

All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!

God in three persons, blessed Trinity! (Holy, Holy, Holy! Stanza 4)

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Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

† SOLI DEO GLORIA †