

The Festival of the Holy Trinity

16 June, Anno Domini 2019

St. John 3:1-17

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In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

There is no denying it. The Christian faith isn't exactly logical, at least insofar as we can be logical. There is a tremendous amount of what we confess that defies explanation. There are mysteries, such as the Blessed and Holy Trinity - three distinct and equal persons and yet only one God. Try as we might, we simply can't explain them or work them into equations or really even come up with adequate words. Apples, eggs, circles in triangles - they are all insufficient to capture the majesty of the Trinity. And we live in a society that has grown very uncomfortable with mystery and things that we can't explain. Sadly, for so many, the only thing that exists in their minds is what they can immediately see or conduct experiments on.

But don't buy the line. You don't have to be able to understand or explain everything. Can you measure or create emotions? But we certainly believe in them as we experience them everyday, all day long. Is there an equation to explain the love of a husband for his wife or father for his child? Is it really then such a stretch to simply except that there is a whole host of other things that are true even though they lie outside our ability to understand or rationalize them? Nowhere in Holy Scripture does God ask you to understand His nature and essence. Only believe. Only confess that which The Triune God has revealed to you in His Word. You don't have to fill in the gaps.

That is the very nature of faith. It believes what it can't prove. It receives from the Lord in humility, submitting to the Lord God as creature to Creator. It is satisfied with what is revealed even when that isn't everything, even when all the questions aren't answered. It is simply enough that God has spoken - God who is truth and will not deceive; God who gave His only begotten Son to save us from sin and death.

This is why God has given you His Word - so that you may rightly know Him. He doesn't leave it to our imagination or our reason to figure out who He is. Look around the world and you will see what happens when sinful man tries to imagine what God must be like - He is always imagined to be a God who saves good people and condemns bad people (if He condemns at all). He is largely satisfied with

whatever level of effort you decide to put it and He is supposed to be quite content with you deciding what kind and how many good things you choose to do. He isn't that bothered by sin. In fact, as long as it makes you happy, He's happy, even if it is something that He knows is evil and harmful to you. His chief concern is that you are happy. He is perfectly satisfied if you don't feel like giving Him any of your attention. A check-in whenever it is convenient would be nice, but don't inconvenience yourself. Either that or He is a terrible tyrant who has never even heard of the word "mercy". He is ready at a moment's notice to smite you for your failure to obey and actually takes a great deal of pleasure in it. If you are going to be spared eternal judgment it will only be because you worked hard enough and followed all the rules.

This is what man always comes up with. It doesn't matter what name you slap on it, every false religion is rooted in a false understanding of God. And that would be perfectly understandable if God hadn't explicitly revealed Himself through His Word and through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is absolutely an unexplainable mystery how the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, how the Spirit proceeds from both but is also Himself of equal Godhead, how it is that each person of the Godhead is distinct but there remains only one God. But this is exactly what God has revealed in His Word. It doesn't need to make sense. It simply is and what joy beyond all telling that we have been blessed to know and confess this!

But the Trinity isn't even the greatest mystery, not according to St. Paul. The greatest mystery is that this Triune God - Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit - has desired and acted to save us poor sinners who are constantly trying to mold and shape Him into our own image. The very fact that you and I are here in the presence of God this day, hearing God speak with our own ears, being absolved of our innumerable and immeasurable offenses, receiving as true food and drink the Body and Blood of God - that is a mystery indeed! No one on earth would ever have imagined such a God who loved those who hated Him and was willing to offer up His only-begotten, sinless Son to death so that He might save His enemies. Neither the wisest philosopher nor the smartest scientist has ever come to the conclusion that we must be born again, born from above, by water and the Spirit if we are to see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel was baffled by the idea, being so caught up in his own wisdom and understanding that he actually believed Jesus was telling him to re-enter his mother's womb and be born of the same flesh again.

Nicodemus was blinded by his flesh just as you and I so easily are. In our desperate desire to be good enough, we don't want to believe that, even though we

are drawing breath, we are dead. Sinful flesh gives birth to sinful flesh. It can't do any other. It is just as preposterous to imagine that sinful flesh can give birth to a truly God-fearing person as it is to imagine that monkeys can give birth to a man. Fathers, this is the great gift you gave to your children when they were conceived. You shared with them the death of sin just as your fathers did with you. Happy Fathers' Day!

Nicodemus didn't believe that he was a lost and condemned creature, incapable of making himself righteous. Why then would he need to be born again from above? Why not just repair the minor blemishes that stained his otherwise pious and holy flesh? Because our flesh isn't merely stained. It is corrupt to the core, turned completely away from God. We were conceived and born in sin and in death. If we are to be saved we must be given the new birth of water and the Spirit. We must be born again not of the will of man but of the will of God. We don't crawl back into our mother's womb, but in Holy Baptism we are drawn out of the womb of our eternal mother the Church, passing through the waters of the font, drowning our Old Adam so that a New Man may daily emerge and arise to live before God in all righteousness and purity forever. Without this Divine washing we cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. It's not optional. This is the way which God Himself has ordained. Let us receive it in faith.

And, what's more, God desires to give this new birth to all people. Christ died for all men that all men might be saved through Him, that all might be born again from above, baptized into His death and His resurrection to eternal life. This is a mystery indeed, but not because we don't know it. Only because we can't explain it or make sense of it. But we do know it. It is plainly set before us in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit has caused His prophets and apostles and evangelists to set down in written word the Good News of our salvation. It is not hidden from us. We can hear and read it for ourselves. And fathers, God has blessed you with the vocation and honor of giving and teaching these things to your children, bringing them to the font and preparing them for Holy Communion so that we may all together with one heart and voice believe and confess these great mysteries of the faith now and for all eternity. There is nothing more pleasing to God than when a sinner believes the good news that he hears from the pastor as from God Himself.

Set reason and logic and philosophy aside. The wisdom and desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the wisdom and desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. They are opposed to one another and cannot peacefully coexist. Reason and logic and philosophy have their place but not in those things that pertain to the Divine Majesty. Here their rightful role is to be silent and receive the mystery of the

Trinity, the mystery of our salvation, and all the other mysteries of the faith with reverent humility and awe. You aren't called to understand or explain, only believe and by believing on the Lord Jesus who was lifted up high on Calvary's cross as the atoning sacrifice for your sin, be saved. Rejoice in that which God has revealed and praise Him for what He has not. Christ and the apostles have born witness to what they have heard and seen. Receive their witness in faith, as from the very mouth of God Himself.

May God grant to each of us to joyfully confess Him before heaven and earth the one, true, Triune God who has mercifully worked salvation for us and may we receive the mystery of salvation revealed in Christ with sincerity and faith.

In the Name of +Jesus.