

Trinity Sunday
Our Lady of Dallas, Abbey Church
June 3, 2012
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Over the last few months at Sunday Mass, we have been reading the story of Jesus going more or less in chronological order beginning on the first Sunday of Lent with the gospel passage of Jesus going alone into the desert which prepared him for his public ministry. In subsequent Sundays, we continued to read his story which included his final entry to Jerusalem which we celebrated on Palm Sunday. As we read this account of Jesus' earthly life, we imitated it's time line – Jesus' forty days in the desert is the paradigm for our forty days of Lent. The last days of Jesus' earthly life, his death and resurrection we commemorate with our Holy Triduum. After Easter Sunday, we read of his appearances as a resurrected human being and our Easter season corresponded to the forty days that he was on the earth after his resurrection. The dates of our celebration his Ascension and then Pentecost also match how it happened historically. This Sunday is in a sense the first Sunday since Lent that we depart from the chronology of Jesus' story. The gospels only take us to Pentecost on the historical level. And yet the story of Peter and the apostles continued. Their story after Pentecost continues to be told in the Acts of the Apostles but not for very long. The continuation of the story of the followers of Jesus after the historical account in the Bible ends is less well known. How the apostles and then their successors managed without Jesus' earthly presence is a fascinating story.

A major challenge of the early Church was understanding the correct meaning of the words of Jesus and one of the greatest things that he revealed to us was that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is a mystery that can never be fully understood but some early Christians in an effort to make the Trinity logical to themselves, made false assumptions based

on Jesus' words and produced erroneous ideas about the Trinity. In the 4th century the bishops, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, clarified the teaching of God as three persons and composed a creed which we recite even today at every Sunday Mass.

Though certain theologians erred by trying to explain the Trinity logically, the supposition that the Holy Trinity or any other faith doctrine is outside of the sphere of logic is incorrect. We may not understand some element of the faith, but with study and some good guidance from others and God we can come to understand, at least in part, why God is the way he is or why he created something the way that he did. Faith and reason are not incompatible; instead they go very much together.

For example in the 12th century, a monk wrote an explanation of why God must be a Trinity of persons based on reason and what we know about God from scriptures. He writes that if God is the supreme being and the perfection of goodness then he must also have supreme charity. Yet no one has charity based on his own private love of himself. Love must be directed toward another. Therefore if God is only one person, he does not have love. One may raise the objection that God could have love toward his creation. Yes, however, he cannot have supreme love toward creation or a created person. For God's love to be perfect and highest, he must love someone who is worthy of supreme love, and only God is worthy of supreme love. Therefore, God's love must be directed to an equally divine person.

Another argument is that if God is perfect and supreme in all things then he must be supremely happy. Happiness is not possible without love and the greatest happiness is when love is mutual. In mutual love there must be both one who gives love and one who returns love.

So far this reasoning has only established that God must be a duality, that is, two persons. The next point states that when two persons mutually love each other, they delight in each other's love and experience a joy of their giving and receiving love. This joy is so great that they want to share the delights of their love with another. In other words, God's love would not be perfect if two divine persons could not share the accumulation of joy they have with another person. It shows also that God's perfection does not lack a supreme level of generosity which shares its supreme love and joy with an equally divine person.

God is one God and three persons. It is perhaps easiest to think of the Triune God as a community of supreme and perfect love. In heaven we will not simply observe and look at the magnificence of God. God wants us to enter into the Holy Trinity, to participate in the love of this community. This will not cause the Trinity to be four persons. Our door to enter into the Trinity is Christ. The more we are united to him, the more we will be ready to enter the wondrous space of the Holy Trinity. But there will be no room for selfishness, greed, lust, impatience, these things will not fit through the door. Jesus' dream for us is that we be with him in the Trinity. It is one of the last things that he said before he was arrested and crucified. In John Chapter 17, Jesus says: Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.