

Homily for the Most Holy Trinity, Year C

June 15, 2025

St. Bavo Parish

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First Reading: Proverbs 8:22-31 (The wisdom of God speaks about her role in Creation.)

Responsory: Psalm 8 (O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!)

Second Reading: Romans 5:1-5 (The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.)

Gospel: John 16:12-15 (The Spirit of truth will guide you to all truth.)

Jesus told his disciples, “Everything that the Father has is mine,” and the Holy Spirit will, “take from what is mine and declare it to you,” thus, guiding you to “all truth.” That’s about as close as any Scripture passage is going to get to a full-blown doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Clearly, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all distinct from one another, or else Jesus would not be able to speak of his Father and the Holy Spirit as he does. Yet, everything that belongs to the Father also belongs to the Son, and the Holy Spirit declares *only* what he hears from the Father and the Son. Hence, these are not *three gods* with their own separate agendas. Rather, they are *one* God, who share a single divine will.

St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans seems to reinforce both the distinctness and oneness of the three Divine Persons, although not as explicitly as Jesus did. Referring to the Father as simply “God,” Paul says, “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and, “the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” So, once again, the three are distinct, yet they act in concert with one another to bring us peace and pour out the love of God into our hearts.

Even the Book of Proverbs, written centuries before Christ came into the world, strongly suggests a communal nature within God. The wisdom of God speaks about being co-eternal with God and playing an essential part in the creation of the world. It’s not clear whether we should identify that “wisdom of God” with the Son or the Holy Spirit, neither of whom had been revealed yet, but this ancient text definitely appears to hint that God is a communion of *at least two* divine persons.

There are plenty more hints, especially in the Gospels, that the nature of God is more complex than that of a single, solitary being. Jesus frequently spoke about God as his “Father,” but claimed that he and the Father are “one.” The religious authorities of his day immediately understood that Jesus was making himself equal to the God of their ancestors, the one true God, whose wondrous deeds are recounted in the Old Testament. That’s why they accused him of blasphemy, because they correctly inferred that Jesus was declaring his own divinity. Then, at the Last Supper, as Jesus was about to depart from this world, he spoke about the Holy Spirit. As we heard in today’s gospel, this Spirit would continue the work of revelation that began with the Father in ancient times and reached an entirely new level with the Incarnation of the Son. The Holy Spirit would bring that process of revelation to its completion by guiding the faithful to “all truth.”

So, the basis for a doctrine of the Holy Trinity is certainly present in the Scriptures. Yet, it took about three centuries for theologians to put the pieces together and formulate the dogma that we profess today. One possible reason for the delay is that the Church's belief in the Holy Trinity arose primarily from *personal experiences of God*, not from biblical scholarship and theological reflection. We experience God in different ways at different times. Though we hold firmly to the core monotheistic belief that "God is one and there is no other," we also sense that there is a *communion* of three Persons contained in that oneness.

While the Hebrew Scriptures portray God as an almighty Creator, to be feared and obeyed by all mortal creatures, they also highlight God's *personal relationship* with his chosen people. The God of the Old Testament is not just an impersonal force of nature, but a loving *Father*, who cares for his often wayward children. Like our ancestors in the faith, we know God to be like an ideal parent, who sometimes instructs, sometimes admonishes, but always loves his children unconditionally. Hence, it doesn't seem at all blasphemous or presumptuous for us to pray to God as our *Father*, just as Jesus encouraged his disciples to do.

However, sometimes we feel more comfortable praying to *Jesus*. And when we do, we have no doubt that we are addressing ourselves to *God*, who became incarnate as a human being. Although Jesus revealed that he and the Father are one, we *experience* Jesus' love for us in a different way than we experience the Father's love. We can relate to Jesus both as our Lord *and* as a fellow human being. We can reflect on his human compassion, as well as his suffering and death, even as we worship him as the Savior of the world and the King of the Universe. Through his *humanity*, revealed to us in the Gospels, we can come to know the Divine Son as we can never know the Father. Yet, we sense intuitively that the love which we encounter in both of them is, in fact, the *same* divine love, just manifested in different ways.

The Holy Spirit obviously is distinct from both the Father and the Son. Otherwise, Jesus could not have said that he was going to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples after he returned to the Father. However, it is our personal *experience* of the Holy Spirit that truly convinces us that the Holy Spirit is God *and* that it is not the same as the Father or the Son. There is something unique about the way the Spirit moves us, seemingly rising up from within. In some ways, the Spirit doesn't seem quite as "personal," because we can't conceive of the Spirit as having a human face like Jesus or possessing the personal qualities that we associate with the Father. Yet, the Spirit feels even closer, even more intimate. It's not just *with* us, but *within* us. And, whenever we feel those mysterious movements of the Spirit within us, we recognize the touch of divine grace. We sense the presence of the same God whom we know as a heavenly Father and as Jesus, the divine Son. It is undeniably *one God* whom we experience in these three distinct "persons."

The only way that we could possibly know these deep truths about the hidden nature of God is that God wished to reveal them to us. We worship God as the Most Holy Trinity *not* because we were clever enough to probe the Mystery and discover the truth *on our own*, but because God has blessed us with an intimate knowledge of himself. It appears that God wants us to know and love him *as he is*: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – one God in three Persons.