

Trinity Sunday
Homily of May 20, 2005
by Father Brian Joyce

This evening, as we celebrate Trinity Sunday with the whole Church here at Christ the King, we welcome Our Lord of Pardon Prayer Group and their annual Philippino Fiesta, to which you are all invited. Now, Our Lord of Pardon Prayer Group, whose main images for devotion are El Santo Nino, which shows Jesus as a child among us, and Mary, as the Virgin Mother, and then Jesus as our Savior on the cross.... The Lord of Pardon Prayer Group doesn't meet just once a year for this fiesta. Every Friday of the year, they have family prayer in different homes throughout the parish. In many ways, they stand for two things. One is family prayer, and the other is welcome, which is a reminder that you are all welcome to the Fiesta afterwards, over in the gym, for entertainment and for food and dances, and welcome to continue the celebration there. Everyone is invited.

The gospel that we heard tonight was chosen for the Feast of the Trinity, and they are the most familiar lines in the Bible that you will ever hear, the ones that you always know..... if you are a football fan.... John III, 16. It's posted in each end zone, for some strange reason that I have never understood. It says that Jesus came to give us eternal life, and I am out there rooting as a Raider fan and saying, "I just want a little life right now! ... Just one touchdown and I will be happy."

But it talks about "God sent his only son that we might have eternal life." And the meaning of "eternal life" in the Bible is at least two-fold. First of all, by "eternal life" we are talking about the after-life. We are talking about, the phrase that I like to use, "life that really lasts." And I have to say that this last week, (And the coming week looks the same!) here at Christ the King, we are having one funeral after another funeral, after another funeral. And the one thing I always feel as I stand here with the casket with someone's remains is that our God says to us there is more. It does not end here. There is more. And that's one thing we mean by "eternal life." But when I translate it to "life that really lasts" it means that there is afterlife. There is more. It does not end here.

But it also means something about right here and now. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and have it in abundance" and he did not say "later on." He did not say that you might have abundant life later on. He meant right here and now. And eternal life is something that we are called to, a quality of life here and now, that God and God's Spirit gifts us with. Now, it doesn't mean the end of aches and pains or problems or pressures. The first of the noble truths of Buddhism is that life is suffering. And we Christians really recognize the same thing. There are always hard times and suffering in life. But somehow, our life is to partake in our God and image the life of our God and have some of the qualities of the likeness of our God.

So, a good question is "What is our God like?" Last week, when Father Dibble was speaking, I enjoyed his children's letters because they give a notion of God that is very clear and simple. He left out some letters that I particularly like. I like the one, the eight year-old girl, that wrote, "Dear God, Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?" Or another eight year-old, by the name of Robert who was very patriotic. He said, "Dear God, I am an American. What are you?" And another little boy showed that his conscience was beginning to evolve and beginning to recognize something of the difference between right and wrong because he wrote, "Dear God, I am doing the best I can. ... Frank" Just, we want to let you know we are doing the best we can. With children, our understanding of God is clear and simple and very confident.

I think as we grow older it gets more confused and complicated, but, worst of all, it gets distant, that God is just so far from us, is not as close as one another and as close as our own hearts. And so we talk about God and it's true, we talk about God in Star Wars language. We talk about God as "the force." "May the force be with you." God is an overwhelming force. We talk about God as "the ground of our being, the foundation of the universe." And God is that. We talk about God as "unconditional love," and that is true and it is wonderful, and it is the Gospel. And, to me, it is just a little bit vague and impersonal... unconditional love. We talk about God as "the first flaring forth of our universe." Scientists want to call it "The Big Bang," but it is really God's unconditional love bursting into creation. And yet, at that same time, it is a little bit like "May the force be with you." And Trinity Sunday comes to save us from that, to say that our God is all of that, far more personal and far more near and far more social than that, and that we are called, if we want to have eternal life, to be like our God.

Now, what is our God like? I love one of the questions that a mystic and theologian in the Middle Ages, Meister Eckart, wrote. He asked the question, "What does God do all day long?" And his answer was the answer of God as Creator. He said, "Our God lies on a maternity bed all day long, giving life, giving new life all day long." That's our God, our Creator, and it calls us to be people who are life-giving to those around us, not destroying life, but lifting up people's lives and spirits. That's one thing we are called to do. And then Jesus comes to us as a Redeemer, our God as a Redeemer, which means he comes among us to forgive. So we are called to be forgiving. That is what we are called to. And God comes as a Spirit, and energy for good, an energy for beginning again, an energy to persevere, an energy to stick to it. And I would say, most of all, what we call The Holy Spirit, an energy to lighten up, God's sense of humor. I think that can lift up the whole universe and the whole world.

That's what we do on Trinity Sunday. We celebrate that we are called to be in the life of our God, that we believe in the life of our God, that we struggle to share the life of our God, which is a God that calls us to be life-giving, to be forgiving, and to have a sense of humor, to be a people who celebrate and believe in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.