

Most Holy Trinity - (Year A) – June 11, 2017

EX 34:4B-6, 8-9; DN 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; 2 COR 13:11-13; JN 3:16-18

It can be a little puzzling to ponder why the Church gives us the particular Gospel passage we just heard, on the Sunday we celebrate the **Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity**. For one thing, this passage doesn't even mention the **Third Person of the Trinity**—the *Holy Spirit*. So, why this Gospel passage?

Listen again to this brief three verse snippet from John, Chapter 3:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (Jn 3:16-18)

What do references to **perishing**, **salvation** and **condemnation** have to do with the fact that the One True God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

One word can help us unpack this mystery:

Identity.

More specifically, this question:

Where does *our* identity come from?

If you ask our very **confused** and very **godless** secular culture this question, you'll be told that a person's identity is determined by **his** or **her feelings** about **him-** or **herself** at any given moment. If I am a man, but *feel* that I'm a woman, then I can "**identify**" as a woman (and vice versa), and nobody better dare contradict me no matter how **unnatural**...no matter how **illogical**...no matter how **unbiological**...this basis for my **self-definition** is.

And here, *in just this one particularly twisted aspect of our society*, we begin to see the kinds of dynamics that compelled God to send his only Son—**Jesus**—so that we *might not perish, but might have eternal life*. After all, a society that advocates the

idea that something as **central**, something as **essential**, as an individual's identity is determined by something as **fluid** and **fluctuating** as passing feelings, is clearly on a collision course with **self-destruction**, based on its own *self-delusion*.

From the Christian standpoint, on the other hand, human identity has a very different source—**God himself**.

The **Book of Genesis** proclaims:

...God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)

Much later, when Jesus—responding to a “**gotcha**” question about **marriage** and **divorce** in the Gospel of Mark—spoke of this Divine origin of the human person, he said:

...from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.’ So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mk 10:6-9)

So, God made human beings, **male** and **female**. And this *maleness* and *femaleness* are part and parcel of our bearing the image and likeness of God. In fact, Jesus said, “**for this reason**”—meaning, “*precisely because of human masculinity and femininity*”, and their relation to each another—the two become one.

So, far from being a merely **inconsequential** or **accidental** part of who we are, our sexual identity is *essential* to our relationship to other human beings...**and to God!** *It's an integral part of who we are, and is directly related to the image of God that each one of us bears.* Our sick society, on the other hand—precisely **because of** its alienation from God—considers our sexual identity an *incidental afterthought*.

Now, let's focus, specifically, on the point in time where God had only created a **male** human being—*Adam*. Remember what he said—**at that point**—after bringing all the animals to the man to be named? God said:

“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”
(Gen 2:18)

Why is it not good for the man to be alone? And what does this issue have to do with the **Trinity**?

Here let's consider the words of **John the Evangelist** in his **1st New Testament Letter**, where he wrote:

God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16).

As the eminent Catholic philosopher, **Peter Kreeft**, put it:

God is not just one who loves; God is complete love itself. Complete love itself includes (1) a lover, (2) a beloved, and (3) the act of loving that flows between the lover and the beloved. In God these are (1) the Father, (2) the Son, and (3) the Holy Spirit, one God in three divine Persons, who make up complete love. This is the doctrine of the Trinity, a tri-unity of God. There is only one God, not three, but this one God is the three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

—Peter Kreeft
(*Because God is Real*, p. 21)

Here's an important fact of Revelation: **The One God of Christianity is a family.**

That means **God's very essence** is a *union of life giving love*. The Persons of the Trinity give themselves *without restriction* to one another. **God the Father** loves the **Son** completely and totally. **God the Son** returns that love to *the Father* completely and totally. And that love between Father and Son so completely *contains* everything of the lover and beloved that it is personified in a **Third Person—God the Holy Spirit**. That's why we can say that the **Holy Spirit is** the Spirit of the Father **and** the Spirit of the Son.

Love, then, is the very nature of the Persons of the Trinity.

The reason, then, that God said that it was not good for the man to be alone, is precisely because, *to be in the image and likeness of God, is to offer oneself as a total gift of self for one's beloved*, because that's how God is...that's **WHO** God is.

The only way that human beings can **naturally** express love in such a way that **naturally** leads to the generation of a third person—a person who *contains* the

persons of the lover and beloved within him- or herself—is through the union of male and female.

The **natural family**—embodied in *natural marriage of male and female*—is then, the *icon* of the *supernatural identity of God*. So important is this natural human union of male and female—*created in the beginning by God*—that Jesus elevated this union to the level of **Sacrament**—specifically the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

The beauty of our Catholic faith is that, even though the nature of the **Trinity** is beyond our limited human capacity to *fully comprehend*, we can, nevertheless, see how **natural marriage is the one aspect of human existence** that most closely **mirrors** and therefore *reveals* something of **the very nature of who God is**.

And this helps us understand, in a much more comprehensive way, why the Catholic Church makes such a big deal about sexuality and marriage!

And it also makes crystal clear why any attack on **sexual identity** and the **nature and definition of marriage** has much bigger implications for human life and our ultimate destiny than mere *politics, ideology* or “*who loves whom*”.

The fact of the matter is that the greatest battles and debates and over **sexual identity** and **marriage** are not the battles waged in **courtrooms** or **legislatures**. The real battle is being waged at a much higher level—the highest level possible, in fact—because the battle is being waged by **Satan against God**—and sexual identity and the nature of marriage constitute the *primary battlefield*.

Why?

Because our connection—our union and communion—with **each other** and with **God** is at stake.

And the Devil knows this!

Long before this battle over sexuality and marriage began to play out in such a **visibly disturbing way** as we see it today, **Sr. Lucia Santos**—who, as a ten-year-old girl, was one of the three children to whom **Our Lady of Fatima** appeared 100

years ago in Portugal—Sr. Lucia, many years after the Apparitions at Fatima wrote these words:

“...the final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be about marriage and the family. Don’t be afraid, she added, because anyone who operates for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be contended and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue. And then she concluded: however, Our Lady has already crushed its head.”

<https://onepeterfive.com/sister-lucia-final-confrontation-between-the-lord-and-satan-will-be-over-family-and-marriage/>

Why else was **Satan’s first attack** on humanity centered on the **first marriage**—between Adam and Eve?

And what was the **result** of his cunning attack?

Division between male and female; and **division** between human beings and God. That battle continues to this day, and the fallout from that battle is more **evident** and more *alarming* than ever.

The Catholic Church always looks at important *human* issues from the highest vantage point—from the standpoint of **human nature**—and the effects on human nature of particular **actions**...and particular **decisions**.

So, when the Church defends **natural marriage** and the *dignity* and *complementarity* of male and female, it’s because the Church is both the **foremost expert on human nature** and the **guardian of Truth**—the truth about God and the truth about the human person.

The Church is the foremost expert on human nature because *the Church was established by the creator of human nature* and, since the outpouring of the **Holy Spirit at Pentecost**, the Church is forever *guided and protected* by the Spirit of Truth—the Spirit of God—**God the Holy Spirit**.

A fallen world, **deceived and blinded by the Father of Lies**, is incapable of seeing how the union of male and female both **reveals to us**...and **connects us to**...God, *as he is*, in his very nature. So, we should not be surprised that the world opposes the **Church’s view on sexuality and marriage** because those under the grip of the Devil *“know not what they do”* (cf. Lk 22:34).

And that is why our Gospel today reminds us that...

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (Jn 3:16-18)

To reject the truth of the human person — **male and female created in the image and likeness of God** — is to reject our *identity* and our *destiny*. It is to *condemn oneself* to the alienation from **God**...and from **one another**...that the Devil unleashed in the **Garden of Eden** and that has snowballed to *ridiculous proportions* right up to 2017.

And here, **St. Paul's** words to the **Corinthians** from our **2nd Reading** become a great source of encouragement for the battle before us:

Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Cor 13:11)

God's love and mercy aim at the restoration of **union** and **communion**, between human persons...and between humanity and God.

The fact is, we cannot know everything about God.

But knowing something of the extent of his love, and knowing just how far he was willing to go to restore us to communion with one another, and with Him, by giving his Son for our salvation, we not only see him **more** for who *he* is.

We also see *who we are* in his eyes...and how much we are cared for and cared about...in his **heart**.