

## The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity “The Value of Presence”

Fr. Frank Schuster

This past week I enjoyed my twentieth anniversary to the priesthood. I wish to give a special word of thanks for those who helped with it in the parish and for those who were able to be here. I know Wednesday is tough day to drive to our church. I am also grateful for those who couldn't be here but were nevertheless with me in spirit. I confess there was a time when I was a kid that that I shamefully looked at anniversaries like the end of the year awards that would be handed out in elementary school classrooms growing up. I promise this will makes sense, but do you know what I am talking about? Remember those? Well, the award that irritated me the most was the “perfect attendance award” handed out to kids who never missed a day of class that year. It irritated me because, for one, these were the same kids who came to school sick and got the rest of us sick, causing us to miss school and not get that award. Secondly, an award for simply being present in class and for no other merit than simply being there didn't seem worthy of an award in my opinion as a kid. And so, as time went on in my early years (and I feel bad about this now), I somehow started to think of birthdays and anniversaries a little bit like that award. It felt like, OK we are celebrating the fact we are still here and breathing. Yippy Skippy! What changed my mind about all that though was attending anniversary celebrations of loved ones and especially after I was ordained a priest. After I was ordained, I got to start celebrating other people's anniversaries on a regular basis (usually marriages), ten years, twenty years, twenty five years, thirty, forty, fifty years. We have a priest in the Archdiocese, Fr. Bill Treacy, celebrating his 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary to the priesthood this year. You know what I learned from couples and priests whose vocations have survived over the years? A big reason why they are still married or still a priest is because of attendance, they remained present in their vocations to their spouse or to their ministry as is in the case of a priest, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, day after day after day. It's beautiful when you think about it this way and wonderful too. And so, when we are talking about vocations and anniversaries, as I admire people who have been at it much longer than me, the values of attendance and presence are very big deals and worthy of celebration.

I mention this because I think this is a way of appreciating this weekend's celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. We think of God as being one and three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Theologians like to think in Chalcedonian terms of “Godness” as being described as the eternal divine nature that unifies Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Another way of looking at it though is through a hermeneutic of love. This is because God is love, we are made in the image and likeness of the God who is love, and so if you are looking for a meaning in life guess what. We are called to love. Following that hermeneutic, St. Augustine suggested that in the inner life of God then we can see the Father eternally forgetting himself in love of the Son and the Son eternally forgetting himself in love for the Father. We can then see the Holy Spirit eternally processing outwards as the love between Father and Son (filioque). Another way of saying this is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one because they have perfect attendance. They are perfectly present to one another for all eternity in such a way that you can only understand them as being three and yet one.

Jesus suggests this kind of unity in our Gospel reading from John this weekend. Jesus says to his disciples, "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you." In this Gospel passage, God seems to be articulated as three persons who are nevertheless one because they are eternally present to each other.

What does that mean for us this weekend? Well, I don't know about you, but June seems to be a really, really busy month for most of us filled with all kinds of obligations due to the school year wrapping up, the fiscal year ending at work, there are graduations, weddings and anniversaries we want to attend, Father's Day is this weekend, and the list goes on. It is a really, really busy month. Our "to-do" lists are long and sometimes we do not have enough time to get everything we would like accomplished. There are only so many hours in a day. And so, if we need to prioritize our "to-do" lists right now since we can't do everything, what would be the best way to go about it? I think the message of Trinity Sunday of Father, Son and Holy Spirit being eternally present to each other can give us an insight. I think the values of presence and attendance to God, family members and friendships should be the top priority. And if you want a deeper relationship with God, if you are seeking that right now, the good news is all we need to do is allow our hearts to be open and simply be present to him. We need to make time for that. We are invited to open our hearts to the love of God who loved us first. We are invited to grow closer to the mystery of the Holy Trinity whose love and grace are eternally present to us through Christ our Lord. Amen.