

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

Bishop Frank Schuster

This past week I enjoyed two graduation ceremonies. The first was with my nephew who graduated from high school and, of course, our graduation here at St. Vincent de Paul celebrating our eighth graders as they now transition to the next chapter of their lives. Every graduation has the same rhythm, lots of opportunities for memories, to share gratitude, and to shower much deserved praise. This latter piece usually takes the form of an awards ceremony. This is something I enjoy the most because it gives me an opportunity to get to know the students better, what interests them the most and where their talents lie. As a kid though, there was one award at these ceremonies that truly irritated me, always causing me to smirk. It was the “perfect attendance” award. Remember that? This award was 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. As an aside, I imagine in the times we live now we will not see that award handed out again in the foreseeable future. However, I had another reason why I rolled my eyes at that award as a kid, a reason that I am not proud about today. You see, at the time, 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 time went on, I even 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. Woo Hoo!

What changed my mind about all of that was attending anniversary celebrations of loved ones over the years...and suffering the loss of loved ones too. How many people in our lives do we so deeply desire to celebrate another birthday with? Anniversaries are important too in that respect. As a priest, I get to celebrate other people’s anniversaries now on a regular basis (usually marriages), ten years, twenty years, twenty-five years, thirty, forty, fifty years. By the way, we have a priest in the Archdiocese, Fr. Bill Treacy, who recently celebrated his 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday and is over 75 years a priest. 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 (you guessed it) 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 perfect attendance and presence in this sense 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 Chaceldonian terms of thinking of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being three Persons who are completely one in their divine nature. 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, Bishop Barron suggests following the thoughts of St. Augustine, 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. Salvation consists of being welcomed into that eternal presence.

Jesus suggests this vocation of presence 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. Jesus redemptive activity welcomes us into that presence.

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 coming, 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 our 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 so to simply be present to him so he can be more fully present to us. We need to make time for that. We are invited this weekend to grow closer to the mystery of the Holy Trinity whose love and grace are eternally present to us through Christ our Lord. We are invited to open our hearts this Sunday, and every day, to the love of our Triune God who loved us first.