

NINTH SUNDAY – OT – YEAR B – OLPH 2012
-TRINITY SUNDAY-

(Deuteronomy 4:32-40; Romans 8:14-17; Matthew 28:16-20)

The story is told of a priest sitting in an airport waiting for his flight. A fellow traveler to kill time struck up a conversation. Said he, "Father, I believe only what I can understand. So, I can't buy **your Trinity**. Perhaps you can explain it to me." The priest reluctantly put down his Sudoku. "Do you see the sun out there?" "Yup." "OK, it's about 80 million miles away from us. The rays coming through the window," said the priest, "are coming from the sun. The delightful heat we are enjoying on our bodies come from a combination of the sun and its rays. Do you understand that?" The fellow answered, "Sure, padre." "The Trinity," the priest went on, "is like that. God the Father is that blazing sun. The Son is the rays He sends down to us. Then both combine to send us the Holy Spirit who is the heat. If you understand the workings of the sun, its rays, and heat, why do you have difficulty **believing the Trinity**?" The man said something about having to catch a flight and was off.

The priest, a physics professor, picked up the puzzle with a broad smile. He doubted whether his recent guest understood the workings of the sun. He knew no one would ever comprehend the mystery of the Trinity this side of the grave. After all, why does God have to tell us everything? In his experience, He tells us only on a need to know basis. His favorite line from the Book of Job popped into his mind. "Can anyone penetrate the deep designs of God?" (11:7) As a scientist and a Catholic, he knew the answer to that question. Try to understand the Trinity and you become like a person staring, as someone said, into the noonday sun to better understand it. All you get is a serious headache requiring extra strength Tylenol and a resolve to buy good sunglasses.

Finally he put down his Sudoku and recalled fondly his late Dogma professor in the seminary. When he came to the section on the Trinity in the textbook, he turned the pages quickly. The prof said, "Professor Thomas Aquinas, late of the University of Paris and the Albert Einstein of his day, didn't understand the Trinity. So, it is most unlikely that you

blockheads will either. Just remember St. Paul mentions the Trinity 30 times in his letters. Take it on faith and you'll muddle through somehow." He trusted that the professor and Thomas both now understood the Trinity perfectly.

This week's gospel presents the last words of Jesus on earth, before he ascended to the Father. St. Matthew makes this both the conclusion and the climax of his gospel. The setting is a mountain in Galilee. Jesus began His teaching in Galilee and would end His teaching in Galilee. St. Matthew put the main body of Jesus' teaching on a mountain earlier in the Gospel in the Sermon on the Mount. Just as Moses received the law on a mountain, Mountain Sinai, the Christians receive the new law from a mountain. The conclusion to this law is given on a mountain. Eleven disciples are gathered there. There were more than this, but these particular eleven were the eleven of the twelve Jesus had picked out earlier. They would become **the apostles**, the ones sent to carry his message to the world. They saw Jesus. Even those who had doubted that he really did rise from the dead, saw Him and did homage. Now they are ready for the Lord to give them His **final instructions**.

Jesus begins by saying that He, the Son of God and their brother, has been given authority over creation. What the disciples must do is go to all the nations and make the people of every land His disciples. **They are to baptize** in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. People are to be taught everything the disciples were taught. All disciples are to know that wherever they go, Jesus is there with them until the end of the world.

The final words of Jesus are presented today particularly because of the reference to baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the new order of creation, God has revealed Himself as one God in three persons. ***He is the Father who creates, He is the Son who redeems, He is the Holy Spirit who empowers.*** We are baptized in the name of all three because the disciples of Jesus both benefit from and manifest all three persons of the Trinity. We have been created by God and are called to share in His creation and stewardship of life. We are redeemed by Jesus, His death reestablished our relationship with God and purchased eternal life for us, redeemed us from the power of evil. We are called to live as new beings, at war with evil. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit. The

Spirit works through us empowering us to bring Christ to others and others to Christ. We make the sign of the cross proclaiming the new relationship we share with God, recognizing what we have received and the responsibility we have to invite others into this relationship.

Are you confused enough? So let me end with a little anecdote that will bring a smile to your face. At a Confirmation celebration the bishop asked a fourteen year old girl for a **definition of the Holy Trinity**. She answered very softly: "The Holy Trinity is three Persons in one God." A little hard of hearing, the bishop replied, "I didn't understand what you said." The courageous teenager said to the bishop, "You are not supposed to, Bishop. **The Trinity is a mystery.**"