

HOMILY ~ THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

MAY 25/26, 2024

Today is Trinity Sunday: three persons, one God. This concept is a little difficult to understand. I have tried many illustrations over the years, and many people have told me that this illustration, that I am about to share with you, was helpful to them. Bear with me for a minute if this is a re-run for you. For all of you here today, I am Fr. Jim. You see me as Fr. Jim. You expect me to do priest things, celebrate the Sacraments, give homilies, be patient and kind and pray. I am also Uncle Jimmy to my nieces and nephews. I have played with them over the years, babysat for them, spent birthdays, graduations and family time with them. They know that I am a priest, but they see and interact with me the way they see and act with their uncle. I am also “Just Jim” to many of my friends. Many of my friends knew me long before I became Fr. Jim. These are the people I socialize with and travel with. They know that I am Fr. Jim, and they know I am Uncle Jimmy, but they see me and interact with me as “Just Jim.” So there you have it. Three different identities, one person. As I stand before you today, Uncle Jimmy and “Just Jim” are here, too; but you only see Fr. Jim. Kind of like three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One God. Kind of like the Trinity.

All of you here today see me as Fr. Jim, but you all have a different image of who that is based upon how well you know me, the interactions you have had with me and the expectations of who you think a priest should be. That is also true of Uncle Jimmy with my nieces and nephews and “Just Jim” with my close friends. What I find very rich spiritually for me about the Trinity is that I seem to connect with different persons of the Trinity based upon my image of each person and what is going on in my life. What I would like to ask you to do today is to pray about your image of each person of the Trinity. By image, I do not mean just a visual image, although that can be part of it, but who you think they are. This changes over time, so it is good to look at this periodically. Most of us had an image of God the Father as an old man with white hair and a long beard who kept track of when we were naughty and nice. That is Santa Clause. That has probably changed as we got older.

When I talk about God the Father, your image is probably affected by the relationship you had with your own father. If the relationship you had with your own father was not very good, your image of God the Father may be negative. You may see him as rejecting, threatening or punishing; and that will probably interfere with

your relationship with him. It may be better for you to think of God the Father as a mother, or as some adult that was nurturing and protective of you. I was blessed to have parents who were both very loving and nurturing; but my father died when I was a kid, so I attribute many of the qualities that my mother had to God, especially the unconditional love she had for me. This is the person of the Trinity that I connect with when I need advice or when I need to feel safe.

Jesus is my best friend. He suffered and died on the cross for me, so I know how much he loves me. No matter what I do, he will always have my back, even when I do things I wish I would not have done. I can tell him anything, and he will still love me. I can fight with him and disagree with him, and he will never leave me. I have friends in this world that I can say that about. Your image of Jesus as a friend may be influenced by the relationships you have had with friends. If a friend has betrayed you or abandoned you, this will probably affect your relationship with Jesus. I connect with Jesus when I just need my best friend, and that is most of the time.

The Holy Spirit is like the wind, you do not know where it comes from or where it is going, but he can move you. Sometimes the Holy Spirit acts like a tornado in my life and moves me to a place where I do not want to go, almost against my will. Sometimes he gently moves me, and I have a choice about whether or not I want to cooperate. I connect with the Holy Spirit in my life when there is no particular rational explanation for what is happening, why it is happening and what I am supposed to do with it. I also connect with him when I am not sure how I am going to work things out; and then suddenly, the solution is right in front of me. This is when I need to trust the Holy Spirit. I need to be open to what is coming into my life, and I need to be curious about what is offered. If you are the type of person that needs to have everything all planned in detail for a long time in advance, you are probably not going to connect very well with the Holy Spirit.

So this is your homework this week. Sit with each person of the Trinity and pray about what exactly your image is of each of them, maybe even write it down. This will help to clarify your image. It definitely affects your relationship with God.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim