

Trinity Sunday, B – May 27, 2018 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Ala. – 5pm Vigil, 8:30 & 11am Sunday Masses – 730 words

For as little as we might understand about the Most Holy Trinity, it is also a teaching with which we are very much at home. Aided by divine faith, we tend to take it for granted. Thus we begin and end our prayers with the invocation of the Trinity; we baptize in the name of the three divine persons, as Christ taught in the gospel; and, through baptism, we share in the very life and love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – three persons in one God, who brings us into communion with him through grace. We firmly believe, as we profess in the Creed each Sunday – even if we might find that belief difficult to explain, or even to understand.

We are capable of understanding, however, precisely because we are made in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity. I spoke about this at length last week: it is in our intelligence where the image of God, who is eternal reason, is most found. Moreover, knowing and loving are closely connected, and because God has opened his love outward to us, we desire to know him better. Our minds are finite, so we can never fully grasp God or exhaust his mystery. But we can come to know a great deal about him, and try we must in this regard. It is important that we have this opportunity each year to reflect upon this central mystery of our faith – it is important also that we all strive to contemplate and study it as part of our ongoing formation besides.

The tension between faith and understanding is so clearly depicted in today’s gospel. The eleven disciples went to where Jesus said; they saw him; and then they worshiped him – but they also doubted. Their faith brought them on their knees, even as their lack of understanding led them to second-guess everything. And isn’t it interesting how it was at that very moment that the Lord gave them his great commission: to go to all nations, making disciples of everyone without exception, bringing them into the life of the Holy Trinity through baptism. and teaching them to live according to God’s commands. He did not wait for them to be certain or confident!

He does not wait for us in this regard, either. For one, imagine if he did: his Church would fizzle out pretty quickly, for it would depend upon our limited understanding and weak faith. Hence Christ added those words, “Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” The work of extending the knowledge and life of the Holy Trinity to all people is the Lord’s – through us. It does not depend upon us alone. He accompanies us – indeed, he promises to do so – until the end of the age. And this is where we may find our confidence and clarity: not in ourselves or our own resources, but in Christ’s – he, who promises to be with us always.

This understanding is key for our work of evangelization. All of us are given this great commission by the Lord. We all have to do our part in bringing all nations to him. About 10 years ago a popular song came out with the title, “Jesus, take the wheel”; I think of it often while driving here around Birmingham. But that line is a sort of prayer we might also say each day for a completely different purpose: namely, that through us and in spite of us, the Lord might accomplish his work of drawing others to a deeper participation in the Trinitarian life. It does not depend primarily upon us – it depends primarily upon him.

“Go and make disciples of all nations”, he commands us; “I am with you always”, he promises. Lord, my faith is sometimes weak and I may even have doubts; I do not understand fully what it is that you command me to share with others. In fact, I tend to take it for granted, thanks to your gift of divine faith. Help me to understand better, but more importantly, please work through me and use me to lead others to you. I offer you this day my mind, my mouth, my hands, my heart; may all come to participate in the life of the Most Holy Trinity – here on earth, and for ever in heaven. Amen.