

Homily053021

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE

I received word yesterday that one of our parishioner's daughters—whose wedding I officiated at a few years back—has given birth to her second child, a son. William Joseph, eight pounds thirteen ounces. Baby, mother and father are all doing fine. God is good.

I remember their wedding day and I had watched her grow up from a little girl in an adolescent and then into a young professional and a mature woman capable of falling in love and entering into a lifelong relationship of love. My friends, in any relationship of love there is the lover and the one who is the recipient of that love, the beloved. And then there is the very reality of their love. Lover. Beloved. Their loving. Each is real. Each is unique. Each is personal. Each is a person. And as unique and personal as they are they do not any longer have a reality apart from their relationship with each other. A community of persons bound together by love. That is the definition of family and it is a definition of God too as revealed in and through Jesus Christ.

My friends, in the Gospel of John we are told in such simple language. God. Is. Love. And precisely because God is love, God has a design, a purpose, a meaning in all that He does both in creation and in redemption. It all flows from the love God is.

In Jesus of Nazareth, the One who referred to God as his ABBA, Father, a new revelation was given. Not just that God is one and that there is one God but that the new revelation is about the very inner life of this one God. There are not three distinct gods like there were distinct gods and goddesses in the Greek and Roman pantheon, or in the Egyptian and Persian mystery cults. From the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River the reality of baptism itself changed. From that moment, baptism not only washes us from our sins, it also bestows upon us the very power of God's Holy Spirit. These words that Jesus gave to his apostles on the mount of his Ascension into heaven have been used from the earliest years of our faith. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

This has been going on for the past two thousand years and we who gather here this morning have all been baptized using this Trinitarian formula. Take the Nicene Creed for example. What is it? It is an elaboration on the meaning and the reality of the Trinity accumulated over centuries. I believe in God the Father Almighty. I believe in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son our Lord. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church. In the Creed we reiterate what we promised in the moment of our baptism.

But is our belief in the Trinity necessary? If there were to be an announcement that the Trinity is being discontinued I wonder whether it would make much of a difference in the life of most Christians. But this is not some incidental truth, this revelation of the inner life of God as Trinitarian. God would never have revealed this inner dimension if God did not think it necessary for us in our own living right here on earth.

But why is it also important? Fundamentally, the trinity is about the inner life of God. God wants us to know and participate in this inner life. It is an exchange of love, an

eternal exchange of love, a mutual giving and receiving. A community of persons bound together by love. That is God. And in our experience where do you think we get our own desire for spousal love or familial love or the love between good friends. Does it originate with us or within us? Does it not rather originate with God Himself and overflow to include us? Equal person but not identical person. The Father is not the Son who is not the Spirit. But all are One.

When our own families are at their best that is what they look like too. The Father God is always reaching out and going out into the other. The Word is always so receptive to and accepting of and at the same time returning the gift of love received. The Word surrenders to the Love received and returns it to its origin. The Word submits its own Will to the Will of the Father. The Spirit of their mutual love is always unifying these two persons. And God desires this very intimacy within God for us too, to be a part of that—not as perfect persons but as redeemed persons and forgiven persons, as made holy by this very inner life of God.

And to accomplish this God chooses to indwell the human soul. I see proof of this reality in the moments I have been privileged to experience when a person is dying. It has not been my experience that at the moment of death I sensed the soul going out of the body ascending into heaven. Rather in my experience the sense is the soul retreating ever more deeply within the person, into the soul of the person, less and less functioning through the human senses. The retreat at the end is inward. And the more important journey in this life is truly the journey inward. It is there that God lives and there where the Lord calls us each by name.

God wants us to know who He is and what He is like and how He lives—and that He wants you and me to have life in Him, keep His commandments, live His Way, and not to judge God or evaluate God or assess God but rather to receive generously and graciously and gratefully in love. Because God truly is love. We can enter and we can be made holy and we can taste and see the goodness of the Lord. And we can strive to be, in our family and relationships, one of a community of persons bound together by love. Let us rejoice to see this great truth in the conception and birth of every child.