

Holy Trinity 2007

Hawaii is one of the premiere tourist spots in the world; but it's no place to visit if you're one of those land-lubbers who doesn't want to get any further away from the ground than the floor of a car. If driving is your only means of transportation, you can't get there. You can set out in that direction, but you aren't going to arrive. And if you believe that you have arrived there by car, hate to be the one to break the news, but that's not Hawaii, no matter what someone else may tell you and no matter what you believe. So, if you're going to Hawaii, you need to plan a trip, and you're going to need some guidance. Theoretically, I suppose one could build a ship or a plane and fly his or her self, but that's impractical and unlikely. Instead, you'll have to enlist the aid of a travel agent who knows when the flights leave or the ships set sail; you'll be offered an array of times and options as to when to leave, what airline to take, and the various benefits involved in each choice. But planning a trip to Hawaii doesn't get you there; you have to get on the plane. You have to stand in line to check in, you have to experience take off, whether you like flying or not; you have to go over the ocean, you have to buckle up for landing. And then, once you've done all this, you're there, and at last you can take in the glories of the destination.

This weekend, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, the greatest mystery of our faith, in many ways the most unfathomable mystery to grasp and in truth, a truth that is beyond our intellectual grasp. We know of the Trinity because Jesus revealed it to us; we believe in the Trinity because not only has it been revealed to us, but there are many passages in Scripture even before the time of Christ which subtly reference the Persons in the Trinity, even as those same Scriptures proclaim one God. And we are baptized into the Trinity, because our Lord gave us the Trinitarian formula specifically as the only licit and valid means to perform baptism, because at baptism we are immersed not only into the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we are brought into communion with the entire Godhead. Unlike other "things of three," the Trinity is not made up of parts or components; the Unity of the Godhead means that there are three persons in the One True God, not three aspects, components, or parts, and certainly not three Gods. They are of one will; and yet they differ in their relationship to one another. The Father is not the Son, and neither of them are the Holy Spirit; and yet they share a unity beyond any known to us. The Spirit is, for us, in a sense, the guide. Jesus says in John's Gospel, "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." Sort of like the travel agent who guides us on how

to get to Hawaii, the Holy Spirit guides us to Jesus and to the Father. The Spirit prompts us, and moves us to act; he helps us to discern what the proper path to our eternal destination is and he gives us the wisdom to recognize that path, and to know to take it. The Spirit gives us the fortitude to remain on the path when the travel becomes difficult, or when we face ridicule or lack support because we are on it.

But if the Spirit leads us on the way to the path, Jesus himself is the way; the way, the truth and the life. The path to heaven is life in Christ, from that immersion which we call baptism to the carrying of the cross. And our Lord said that we must be prepared to carry some cross or another if we would follow him. Saint Paul, therefore, wrote to the Romans “we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint.” I love flying, but I don’t love everything about it. I don’t like the air pressure stuff that goes on, especially when I forget to bring some gum and my ears won’t pop; I don’t like the cramped seats in coach, which I notice seem to get smaller and smaller every time I fly. And so it is with taking the path of Christianity: we are not told to enjoy the afflictions, enjoy what sacrifices large and small that our faith may call for; the martyrs I’m sure would attest that the tortures and pains which they endured, while worth it, weren’t physically pleasant at the time. Whatever cross Jesus challenges us to carry, however, is part of the journey: the way to glory is through some sort of crucifixion, the way to life eternal is by dying to self and living for Christ. The path to heaven is, for most people, predominantly easy and enjoyable; the portions of the journey which are not easy, however, are necessary if we hope to arrive at our destination. And any other destination, even if we called it heaven, would not be heaven at all.

So, if the Holy Spirit is the guide, and Jesus is the way, the Father, then, is our eternal destination. Jesus also said that “no one comes to the Father except through me” and “everything that the Father has is mine,” and prayed of his desire for consummate unity: he in the Father, we in him. On earth, we communicate with Christ through Holy Communion; and even though we know the Father because we now know the Son, our destiny is to behold our Father in heaven; our eternity will be wrapped up in living in the divine presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As the Father and the Son are one, so too will we, as members of Christ’s Mystical Body, be one. It’s why we strive for oneness in belief, discipline, and practice—because union with God, and with all the Christian faithful, is our ultimate destination. And we can hardly say that we want unity there, if we reject it forthrightly here.

Our experiences of each of the persons of the Godhead differ; and yet, in the greatest mystery of faith, there is an oneness in the Trinity which means that we do not experience three Gods, but only one God; and not three aspects of God, but three persons in one God. It is a mystery sublime in its beauty, and incomprehensible in its profundity. But we, as members of Christ's Mystical Body, take this weekend to praise the Triune God, to ponder with our feeble minds the most profound of truths; and to humbly submit our wills to teachings and beliefs which are beyond our intellects, but which we can believe and embrace because God has revealed them through his Son. We are here, worshipping together, because the Spirit of truth has led us to the ultimate truth; and he has given us a spirit of obedience, to accept what he has led us to; and Jesus has gained for us an abundance of graces to keep us on the path; and God the Father continues to love us, love the very thought of us; he continues to keep us in existence and will continue to do so, because he created us in order that we may know and love him as he is. We may struggle at times with the challenges of faith, and wrestle with revelation and theological dogmas; but ultimately, it comes down to remembering what God said in Sacred Scriptures, in the book of Proverbs: "I found delight in the human race." We have found so much more than merely the cross; we have found the way to glory. May we praise the Spirit, who is our guide; let us obediently follow Jesus, who is our way; and let us long to see the Father one day in heaven; praising the Holy Trinity, one God, forever and ever.

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