

## Trinity Sunday

In the name of the Father ... we have just prayed the earliest Creed of the Church. While the Nicene Creed we use at Mass is much more developed, it is also built around this same essential profession of faith – that when we say God, we mean one divine Being who is in fact a communion of three divine Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

We live in a time when the existence of God is widely doubted or even denied. Even those who express some belief in a higher power may consider that power remote or unconcerned with our human joys and sorrows. But agnosticism and atheism are really fairly recent in human history. Ancient cultures and civilizations virtually all believed in some deity, some reality greater than themselves that controlled the world they lived in. Indeed, the problem was usually not too few gods, but too many – household gods, garden gods, weather gods, forest gods. It was like having a huge extended family you struggled to keep straight in your mind. But those gods were simply amplified versions of human traits, and suffered from all the weaknesses of jealousy, indifference, anger, even cruelty, that we too often encountered in ourselves.

With Judaism and Islam, Christian faith declares that there is only one God, the Creator and Judge of all. But only Christianity says what our Creeds do: that God is a community of three co-equal, co-eternal Persons who live in eternal love – a love ever given and received by Father, Son, and Spirit in perfect joy. That's the theology, admittedly abstract and impossible to fully grasp by human thought. This is just what we would expect, of course, for God is greater than we are, and continually surprises even the most faithful souls with infinite life and love. But while God will always be beyond our understanding, God's life is NOT beyond our sharing, for we are each made in the image of God, created for relationships that are perfected in love. I see it so often in families, and especially in the love of parents for their small children – love that is based in the simple awe of the gift of life and the inherent precious goodness of one filled with potential but also fragile and dependent. Perhaps that is why the image of the Madonna and

Child – Mary and the infant Jesus – is such a widely painted theme. In Mother and Baby, we see love made flesh and enter into this mystery.

Trinity Sunday is always a good day to think about the relationships in our lives. Who inspires love and gratitude for me? Do I take time to be with and listen to others? Do I put down the phone and look another in the eye, or do I seem disinterested in the concerns and lives of others? Am I a loyal friend, honest, generous, caring? Is there room for growth in my compassion for those who are troubled, suffering, or those who just seem different from me? Are there relationships I have just let languish for no real reason other than the busyness of life?

Each year, I go back to some words from St. Augustine that help me situate this feast in daily life: “If you struggle to understand the Trinity, know that when you truly love, you will come to know more about God than you could ever know with your mind.”