

HOMILY TRINITY YRA 2017

How many of you have seen the movie or read the book “*The Shack*?” I want to talk about the movie today because I think it gives a good understandable explanation of the Trinity. It is way better than the triangles or the three leaf clover analogies that we sometimes try. These analogies limp because the Trinity is not a thing. The Trinity is a divine loving relationship. One of the things that have a profound impact on our relationship with God is our image of God.

The Shack is about a man named Mac, whose 5 year old daughter is abducted and murdered. He is going through a great deal of pain and suffering. Mac’s wife calls God Papa. Mac says at one point: “This is way too close for me. It is not my thing.” And that is understandable. We learn that Mac was brutally abused by his father when he was a young child, and this image of God as Father does not work for him. He has to see God the Father differently if he is ever going to get close to him. In the movie, Mac spends a weekend with the three persons of the Trinity. God the Father, Papa appears to him as an African American woman. Mac is surprised by this. He says: “I thought God was an old man with a white beard.” Papa replies: “No, that is Santa Clause. You do not know me very well.” Although Mac did not realize it at the time, this African American woman was the image of a woman who was very kind to Mac when he was young and being abused. So Mac could better trust Papa as an African American woman. Later in the film, Mac is able to forgive his father. For the next part of his journey in the movie, Mac needs a father figure, so Papa appears to him as an older Native American man. He can accept this image of God now because he has forgiven his father. But Mac still has trouble trusting Papa because he blames Papa for not stopping his daughter’s brutal murder from happening. He does finally work that out in the movie, so he was finally able to have a trusting and loving relationship with Papa. Jesus appears to Mac as a 30 year old Middle Eastern man, which is who he was when he walked the earth. Mac tells him that of the three persons of the Trinity that he is most comfortable with him. Jesus tells him: “That is because I am human.” Jesus is fully human and fully divine, and because he took on

a human body and we have an account of what he did, we can more easily relate to him. The Holy Spirit appears to him in the form of an Asian woman. She is the Spirit of life, of creativity, or wisdom, and accompanies Mac on appropriate times on his journey. Each of the persons of the Trinity is distinct, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, and neither of them are the Holy Spirit but they are intimately involved in what the others are doing. This is depicted in the film. When Mac is alone with one of the persons of the Trinity, later dialog with the others makes it obvious that they knew exactly what happened. They were there, even though Mac did not see them.

The Trinity is a relationship of divine love. It is not a closed system. The divine love of the Trinity spills over onto all creation. God desperately wants to have a relationship with us. God is particularly fond of each of us. God meets us where we are and reveals himself to us in ways that we can understand, like the way he revealed himself through Jesus and the way he revealed himself to Mac through an African American woman. We can better relate to different persons of the Trinity at different times in our lives, but just because you feel more connected to one does not mean that the others are just as present to you.

For your home work this week, I am going to ask you to think about your image of God. Your image of God can profoundly affect your relationship with God. If it is an old man with a white beard who is waiting for you to do something wrong so he can punish you, how close will you ever come to him? Maybe your image of God is affected by your relationship with a family member. Maybe you are blaming God for something that he did not do. It is ok to be mad at God for a while, but eventually you have to resolve that. We can change our image of God if we come to know him better. God can never be fully understood or completely known by us because we are not divine ourselves. But we can grow closer to him by making our image of God closer to who he really is.