

HOMILY TRINITY SUNDAY 2018

Today is Trinity Sunday. Today we celebrate the fact that God is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and still one God. It is one of the central concepts of our faith. It is much more than just an intellectual concept, it has real meaning in our lives. If we gain a better understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, we have a better understanding of who God is and we can grow closer in relationship with him.

How is this possible? Let me try and explain it in this way. I play many different roles in my life. I for example am Father Jim to all of you. I am your pastor. You each have a particular image of me as pastor, and my guess is, if I went around the church and asked what that is, I would get different answers. Your image of me is probably affected by pastors you have known in the past, what you expect of me as pastor, interactions you have had with me, and things you have seen me do. How you relate to me is going to be affected by the image you have of me. If your image of me is warm and welcoming you will probably feel free to stop and talk to me. If you have a negative image of me you will likely avoid me. I am also Uncle Jimmy to my nieces and nephews, and they have a particular image of me that does not include the image of pastor. I am just Jim to my personal friends. They each have a particular image of me that does not include pastor or uncle. Each of those images is incomplete. I am much more than any of these individual images. When I am Fr. Jim, Uncle Jimmy and Jim are still there, but you are seeing primarily Fr. Jim. That is sort of what the Trinity is like, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three persons one God.

Now I want you to think of your image of God. We have each created an image of God that is based upon our faith formation, our prayer, and our experiences in life. We each have a different image of God. None of them are complete because we can never completely know

God. However, your image of God is going to affect your relationship with him. Your image of God changes over time as we change spiritually. For example, as children many of us have the image of God as an old man with white hair and a long beard, who is distant from us and is keeping track of who is naughty and who is nice, rewarding those who are good and punishing those who are naughty. That is actually more like Santa Clause than God, but many of us have these images of God left over from our childhood. If your image of God is someone who tests you, tries to play tricks on you, is just waiting for you to do something bad so he can punish you, a God that withholds love when you do something he does not like, you are unlikely to have a close relationship with God. But that image is not accurate. Read the Gospels and point out to me where Jesus ever did any of these things.

We have three persons in the Trinity and we probably have different images of each of them. At different times, it is easier to relate different persons of the Trinity. Let me tell you my images of God. All of them are incomplete. God the Father is that perfect loving Father who takes care of us, gives us advise, keeps us safe and helps us to feel secure. If you did not have a good relationship with your father, that will affect your relationship with the Father. God as mother or grandparent may be a better image for you. God the Son is that perfect friend who always loves and supports us. It is that friend that even when they know we are wrong they will love and support us. That best friend that we can tell anything to. That best friend that will always be loyal and would do anything in their power to help us. That is Jesus. If you have recently been betrayed by a close friend, this will affect your image of God as friend. God the Holy Spirit is the love of God that lives inside of us and will never leave us. That creative force that is trying to lead us to do great things. That spirit of wisdom that informs our decisions.

So what is your image of God? How does it affect your relationship? Is it accurate?