

Sunday Homily
The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity A
June 19, 2011

By Deacon Jeff Claar

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Almost out of instinct, we bless ourselves under the sign of our God who loves us and wants what is best for us. Our sign of the cross invokes the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. But who is this Holy Trinity and why do we believe this and others do not?

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is a basic doctrine of faith in Christianity, and is understandable not with our heads but with our hearts. It teaches us that there are three distinct persons in one God, sharing the same divine nature.

Our minds cannot grasp this doctrine which teaches that $1+1+1=1$ and not 3! But we believe in this mystery because Jesus who is God taught it clearly, the evangelists recorded it, the Fathers of the Church tried to explain it, and the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople defined it as a dogma of our Christian faith.

The New Testament clearly teaches the nature of the Holy Trinity beginning with the Annunciation to Mary when God the Father sends His angel to Mary, God the Holy Spirit overshadows her and God the Son becomes incarnate in her womb. It continues clearly in Scripture at Jesus' baptism and His ascension too. God the Father, Jesus the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are mentioned over and over in Scripture; each with their unique role in our salvation and together as One God.

Our belief and the Church's teaching on the Trinity are spelled out in our Vatican II document, *Dei Verbum*: "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that we should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit and thus become sharers in the divine nature....The most intimate truth which this revelation gives us about God and the salvation of man shines forth in Christ who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of Revelation."

So, God desired to make himself known to us through His Son, who took on our human form so that we could have the opportunity to come to know, love and serve him in this world and be with Him in the next!

This is why we have the Trinity, this is why we need the Trinity-it is God's plan for our Salvation. In particular, Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the final Revelation, the final word; and He tells us no one can come to the Father except through Him. This is what Jesus taught the apostles, and this is what the Church still teaches us today.

How wonderful, how awesome!

Everyone in the world now knows God's plan for us and we can all get along, serve God and one another, and live in peace, right? Well, maybe things aren't that perfect.

Let's take a few minutes to compare and contrast our One, True Faith to two other major religions that share our belief in God and seem to be in the news daily: the Jews and the Muslims.

God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

Christians, Jews, and Muslims all believe in the One God Almighty, the God of Abraham who is our Creator.

We know God as our Father, the Jews call God Yahweh, and the Muslims call God Allah. We, all three, believe in the same God and are trying to serve the same God; so far, so good.

As Christians we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah and our Savior. He is both human and divine. However, the Jews believe Jesus was a prophet of God, but not the Messiah and certainly not God. The Jews still await the first coming of the Messiah. The Muslims respect Jesus as a prophet of God, and they also respect his mother, Mary. They too believe Jesus was only human, and their prophet Mohammed, who lived 600 years after Jesus, was the last and greatest prophet of God.

Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, the reality of the love between the Father and the Son. Neither the Jews, nor the Muslims believe in a Holy Spirit of God.

The Scriptures and Koran

Catholics believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired word of God written by men.

The list of inspired books was decided by the Church 1,600 years ago and has remained constant ever since. This is what we know as our Catholic Bible.

The Jewish scripture is the Torah, known as the five Books of Moses. They are the first five books in the Old Testament. (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – just remember, God Especially Loves Notre Dame!)

The Muslims reject both the Old and New Testament and believe only the private revelations of their prophet Mohamed as he recorded them as the last and final word of God in the Koran.

The Church's Relationship with the Jews and Muslims

Just by this short comparison it is easy to see how believers in the One True God can come to treat each other shamefully at times and at other times charitably. The history of our shared belief in the One True God and all our actions leave much to be desired.

Looking to a new day of improved relations among all people of good will, the Church makes clear in our Vatican II document Lumen Gentium (the Church) “the one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church through which He communicates his grace to us.” And it is only through Jesus Christ that we can find our salvation.

However, we are also called to honor and respect the Jewish people, as Blessed John Paul II called them “Our older brothers in the faith”, as the people of God’s Old Covenant and also those who acknowledge the Creator, the Muslims.

The Church calls us to continued dialog among all good people of faith, so that the love of God as expressed through the Trinity can become self-evident to others. May our good works continue to shine the light of Christ here in Sandusky and throughout the whole world. ###

A good, basic primer on Islam is:

What Catholics Should Know About Islam

By Sandra Toenies Keating

Knights of Columbus website

<http://www.kofc.org/un/eb/en/resources/cis/CIS317a.pdf>

Or, for a hard copy please call the parish office.