

Feast of The Holy Trinity A (6/19/11 – *In the Name of the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

We begin every *Divine Service In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. That says something. A great deal, really. By beginning in this way, we are saying something about the one true God we believe and confess and worship here. Beginning this way, we are declaring to the world the one true God Who has created, redeemed, and sanctified us ... and Who comes to us through Word and Sacrament in this *Divine Service*. Beginning with these words, we are confessing and professing who we are – and, perhaps more precisely, **how** we are – before this one true God Who has revealed Himself to us and the world as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

With divine, almighty, and omnipresent authority – *in heaven and on earth* as our Lord puts it [MT 28.18] – the risen Savior commands His Apostles to *make disciples of all nations* [28.19a]. What the Christ has taught and given them, they now are to hand over to others. These eleven disciples – the Apostles – will be the hands and feet and especially mouth of the Lord. Through His disciples, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will continue His creative and re-creative work in the world. The Son ascends bodily to the Father – as the Church has already celebrated – but He pours out the Holy Spirit – as we observed last Sunday. He will remind them and lead them into all truth ... and will embolden them to proclaim that truth despite all adversity. In this way, the risen and ascended Christ will fulfill His promise: *behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* [28.20].

There is only one direct command in our *Holy Gospel* appointed for this day. *Make disciples of all nations*. However, the Lord will accomplish the expansion of His Kingdom through His Apostles and those who follow in their train in a twofold manner. First, He will make disciples by *baptizing them In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. Second, He will make and keep His disciples by *teaching them to observe*

all things that He has *commanded* them [MT 28.19-20]. The Church, then, is to baptize and teach ... teach and baptize ... until our Savior's visible return in glory at *the end of the age*.

Or ... to say it another way, it is through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and through the Word taught in the preaching that the Lord God will make His disciples. To put it yet another way: the one true God Who has revealed Himself to be three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – will be present with His disciples by means of Word and Sacrament. And by His ever-creative presence through Word and Sacrament, He will grow and sustain His Church. We should not expect the Church to grow in any other manner. We should not look to any other means. It is by Word and Sacrament – and these Gospel means alone – that the Holy Spirit *calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith* [SC II.3].

It is through the Gospel-Word and the visible Gospel of Holy Baptism that God has made us His children – adopted us as sons. It is by God-instituted Baptism *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* that we are who we are in Christ's Kingdom. It is *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* that we are able to come into the presence of God here in this place. That is why the Baptismal Font is at the entrance – a visual reminder of our own Baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ ... of how we are before God. That is why the *Divine Service* begins *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* – so that we are reminded who we are, Whose we are, and how we are.

We all know that we do not deserve to stand here – or even kneel here – before God. With the penitent tax collector, we must cry out: **God, be merciful to me a sinner!** [LK 18.13] Or, as we have it in the *KYRIE: Lord, have mercy upon us*. We have no inherent righteousness of our own – apart

from what the Lord God has given us ... apart from what the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased and won for us. We could not stand before the thrice-holy Lord God if it were not the case that *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ* [GAL 3.27]. All our sin must be covered with the holiness of Christ to stand before our holy God. We must be baptized *in* – baptized *into* – *the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* to stand before the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We must have a righteousness that comes from outside of us – since *we have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment* [ISA 64.6]. We must be clothed with a holiness that is outside of us, since we are by nature unholy sinners through and through. We must be purified – as Isaiah was purified in his vision by means of the burning coal from taken from the altar [ISA 6.6-7]. We must be cleansed *by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior* [TITUS 3.5-6]. We must be baptized *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit defines **who** we are before God ... and **how** we are before God. But it also declares just Who it is Who comes to us here to serve us with His divine Gifts ... and Who we, in turn, believe, confess, worship, and serve here and in our daily lives with our thanksgiving and praise. Notice that the Lord commands His Church to baptize *in the Name*. *Name* is singular here. There is only **one** Name – for God is One. He declares it to be so already in the Old Testament. *Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One* [DEU 6.4]. Yet, mysteriously, that one Name entails three distinct Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Even this mystery the Lord has already “hinted at” in the Old Testament. For the definitive passage on the Lord’s unity would be literally translated: *Hear, O Israel, YAHWEH our Gods, YAHWEH is One*. The word for God is actually in the plural in the inspired Hebrew text – not just here, but

throughout the Old Testament! Yet, the verb that goes with it is always in the singular – right from the very first verse of Holy Scripture. *In the beginning, God* (in the plural ... *Gods*) *created* (a singular verb ... *He, singular, created*) *the heavens and the earth* [GEN 1.1]. Then God the Father speaks His creative Word as the Holy Spirit hovers above the chaotic waters. Thus *in the beginning* the one true God reveals His threefold Persona. The one LORD is the Father Who creates ... the Son Who is the Word that will become flesh to dwell among us and redeem us from our sins ... and the Holy Spirit Who calls us to Himself and makes us holy (sanctifies us) through the Gospel-Word and Sacraments.

This one true God in three unified Persons – this Triune God ... this Holy Trinity – is the God Who comes to us with His mercy and grace, forgiveness and life ... especially in this place. This one true God in three unified Persons – this Triune God ... this Holy Trinity – is the God we believe and confess, worship and serve. This one true God in three unified Persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – has created, redeemed, and sanctified us. It is by virtue of this one true God in three unified Persons – and especially the work of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ – that we may stand before Him as His beloved children ... since we have been baptized *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. Moreover, it is this one true God in three unified Persons Who continually remakes us in His image and likeness ... until that Day when He shall perfectly renew us in holiness, righteousness, and the perfect knowledge of God.

Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confessions of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities. Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity. Let us give Him glory to Him because He has shown His mercy to us. [COLLECT; ANTIPHON]

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]