GOD IN THREE PERSONS - BLESSED TRINITY

I can recall fifty years ago when I had just graduated from seminary and had just been ordained, that I was very eager to proclaim the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Having just returned this week from my Fiftieth anniversary of graduation from Nashotah House, I was reminded again as I visited with my classmates that we were very blessed to spend three years together in such an incredible place. I am saddened that a three-year residential program is no longer the norm in many dioceses and jurisdictions, and I remember fifty years ago being with one hundred seminarians analyzing, debating, eating together and above all, praying together. There is nothing that takes the place of Daily Morning Prayer, Daily Mass, and Daily Evening Prayer in community. I applaud my Alma Mater for never altering that pattern. There is more to simply being able to explain the Holy Trinity in theological terms: one must experience the Holy Trinity, and being in the Chapel three times per day means being immersed in the Mystery of experiencing the Most Holy Trinity.

Sadly, in the age of massive information we all too often think that information is infinitely more important than formation. I am aware that I can access more information today instantaneously than I could fifty years ago, but I cannot access formation in a book or on my computer screen. Praying before the Blessed Sacrament, making one’s Confession, and being in a Holy Place for meditation can never be explained in human terms. There simply is no substitute, and quite frankly, the challenges of parish life and diocesan life - and ecclesiastically life, in general, can easily erode the veneer of spirituality that may be very shiny upon graduation, but in no time it is clear that we should have spent more time praying. Now we live in a world where our opinion has been elevated to the status of a minor truth; we can criticize anything we want, and with social media today our criticisms may seem to be credible. We have lost the ability to critique intellectually and have replaced it with reactionary criticism. I have always believed that we pray first, ponder second and then proceed. Just as the proverbial instructions were “When you wite an angry letter, put it in your drawer for a day or two before mailing it,” we now can write an angry email and with minimal wrist motion send it out to any audience.

In the Most Holy Trinity we see demonstrated the Three Persons - not the three functions - of God. He is the Father. He is the Son. And He is the Holy Ghost/Spirit. Our task today is to take Him to a world that really does not care to discuss the Holy Trinity, because for the world God is irrelevant. In seminary we were prepared to explain Doctrine and Dogma to an uninformed world. Now we take what we know as Truth to a world that does not care about the nature of God. When our theological information, as superb as it may be, fails, it is what we learned in our formation while on our knees that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will empower us to demonstrate in our lives what the reality of the Most Holy Trinity is. In the end it is a credibility issue: is what that priest professes in his life similar to what he actually believes?

I care about my other areas of study, and I continue to study in several of those areas, but it is what I believe about God that has changed my life and has changed the lives of others. I am grateful that I have lived to celebrate my fiftieth anniversary of graduation from seminary, but I am particularly grateful that I had the privilege learning what John the Baptist said so well: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” I know that with my head, but I learned it on my knees. Thank you Lord for those privileges