☩ In the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen ☩

Today is the feast of the Holy Trinity. And it is indeed fitting that this day we have this reading. For on this day we receive Christ’s teaching on salvation. And it is this Sunday, this festival, where we confess the heart of our faith, the most fundamental building block on which the rest of our faith hangs. The doctrine of the Holy Sacred Trinity. Without this doctrine, there can be no salvation. To confess the Christian faith is to confess the Trinity in person and the Unity in substance, of majesty coequal. We confess in the creed that we just spoke that to be saved, one must think this about the Holy Trinity, salvation itself hangs upon the doctrine of the Trinity. Salvation is a distinctly trinitarian act. The Father sends the Son, and the Spirit calls forth belief in what God has done. Apart from the Trinity, there is no life, there is only death, apart from the Trinity all that awaits is eternal death.

We confess that we believe in God the Father, who made us, God the Son, who has redeemed us, and God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us. We confess three persons as the one divine being, our one and only God and Lord. Three persons yet one God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, uncreated, almighty, infinite, eternal, yet not three but one, eternal, infinite, uncreated, and almighty.

The doctrine of the blessed Trinity is the most central doctrine of the Christian faith, but at the same time it is the most difficult to express. And so, quite often, we spend little to no time considering it. We don't spend much time considering it because it is difficult, and we, like Nicodemus, want the mysteries of God to be understandable. Nicodemus came to Christ seeking understanding. He didn’t want to be pondering and puzzling over these things. He wanted the truth of God in human understanding, on his terms.

But if we are honest with ourselves, that is what we ourselves do as well. Sure, we know Jesus is the Son of God, but we don’t like what he says. We are uncomfortable with mystery, with the fact that we do not understand everything. Our sinful flesh always seeks to reduce the truth into simple, lighter, easier sound bites. We reduce the truth to quick quips and pretty pleasantries, and in so doing, we rob it of its truth and beauty. We are bound by our flesh and bound by our reason. Our sinful nature wants to constrain Christ to reason, because if we do that, then we can deal with him on our terms. Then we can figure him out, we can place ourselves over him.

We want to reduce down spiritual things to easy-to-digest bits, into things that we ourselves can manipulate and control. We want to excuse sin, excuse ourselves from thinking through the implications of the faith, so that we can do what we want. So we can continue in our own sins. This is what Nicodemus into, and it's a problem today. It's a problem in the church, it's a problem in our lives. We have become complacent. Willing to accept what has been handed to us without thinking through it, without actually working through it ourselves, putting in the work of reading theology, let the pastor do that, let other people do that. We hear sermons and readings, but quickly forget them. Let us apply them to our lives. Take notes, talk about them on the way home, in the car with your wife and kids, with one another.. All too often, we are content to sit by and continue as we have always been. Because it's easy, and we can pat ourselves on the back about how good we are doing. Just as the Pharisees did, just as Nicodemus did.

But the faith cannot be understood by mere reason, it cannot be grasped by the flesh, it is not bound by the flesh but by the Spirit. The faith must be understood by the things of God. Spiritual truths are only understood by the Spirit. That which is born of the flesh is of the flesh; it cannot be of the Spirit. This is why we must be born again, not that we would have a full understanding now, for that will come on the last day, but so that we might receive that which is given to us. Christ says that “we (that is the Trinity) speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony”. We cannot force God to reveal everything to us, to make it all fit into a nice little box, but he has spoken to us. He has revealed the great mystery of salvation through his son.

No human reason will lead you to confess the Trinity, no human reason will lead you to confess that the Father gave his only begotten son to be an effigy of Satan and sin itself, so that he might be destroyed by God’s love so that when we gaze upon him and believe in him, when we believe that this is actually the satisfaction of God’s law in our place we will receive eternal life.

This alone is the work of God, the blessed and sacred Trinity. This is why we must be born again of the Spirit, born through the waters of Holy Baptism, washed in the blood of Christ given and shed for us upon the cross, and have the name of the Blessed Trinity placed upon our brow. Not so that we might understand all things, but so that we might simply hear and believe, so that we might receive the testimony of the Trinity through the writings of the sacred scriptures, through the mouth of God himself, and through the mouth of faithful men preaching and teaching as they have been taught.

So let us confess as our fathers before us did, the great mystery of the faith. Not seeking to understand and reason out more than God has revealed, but to articulate that which is given to us by our God. Let us seek to understand what has been revealed and apply it to our lives. Let us seek the things of the Spirit, and receive that which God has given to us. Let us receive eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and let us ponder the great mysteries of God.

☩ In Jesus Name. Amen ☩