

HOMILETICS

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TRINITY SUNDAY (June 1)

"Remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." (Gospel)

In the beginning, God made us in His own image and likeness. The first book of the Bible describes the Persons of the Trinity deciding: "Let us make man in our own image and likeness." The Adorable Trinity, Whom we honor today, is the model on which our sharing in God's life is based.

Let us never think of God as living in loneliness. God's deepest revelation about Himself is that He is a community—a Father Who eternally generates a living Image of Himself. His Son, and a Holy Spirit, the bond of love between the two of them so strong as to be Himself a Person. God is a living, loving Community in perfect unity.

In our Christian life we are caught up into the life of the Trinity. We became sons and daughters of God the Father at baptism, precisely by being taken up into the life of the Son. "We became sons in the Son". And the bond that holds us together, that makes us one, is none other than the Holy Spirit.

As Our Lord promised us: "If anyone love Me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make Our abode with him." The very life of the Trinity goes on in us: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me."

So, when the Father sees us, it is actually His Son that He sees. We are all, by baptism, one in Christ. When we pray, it is not our feeble voice that He hears, but the voice of His own Son, Who prays in us.

But above all, it is by our union with one another that we keep alive and increase this Trinitarian life that we share. God's image of unity in diversity is reflected in His Family. If we strive to be open to one another, to be responsive to one another, to live as would brothers and sisters in an ideal family, God will see and love His Son in us, and the Holy Spirit, the source of unity, will be poured into our hearts.

Let no one be so wrapped up in himself and his own little interests as to ignore others. Realizing that we've been baptized into the likeness of Christ, sons in the Son, one in Christ, a real concern for all the members of His Family.

To exist means to co-exist. An egotistic, self-centered life is a destroying, deadening thing. The only difference between a rut and a grave is the dimensions. We are children of God, members of His Family, intimately related to one another. Our gathering at Mass here, is a reminder of this, that we, as a family, along with Christ our Brother, bound together by the Holy Spirit, are on our way back to our Father's Home.

Christ called on each one of us to be a fisher of men—to catch others and bring them into Christ's net. The best fisherman that ever was could not catch fish by remote control; none of us will ever catch a fish just by talking about fishing. We have to go where the fish are, get to work, get involved, be concerned about our brothers.

Make the Trinity a way of life, united as a family, on our way Home to the our Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

CORPUS CHRISTI (June 8)

"Just as the Father who has life has sent me and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on Me will have life because of Me."

As the saying goes: "Everyone loves a lover." Why is this so? It is true because love, if it is sincere and holy, brings joy and happiness into our lives. Sometimes we forget that God is the greatest lover that the world will ever hear about. So sincere and genuine is the love of God for us, that as the Bible says: "He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (Jo. 3.16)

When a young man falls in love, he is not content to keep his love to himself. He will tell his sweetheart about his love. He will express it in various way. Especially, he will wish to give presents as a sign and pledge of his love. Likewise, God is not content to keep His love to Himself. He has told us about His love on many occasions and in many ways, but especially through the gift of His Son Jesus Christ.

God wishes to share with us His most precious possession - - His own life. That is precisely why He sent His Son to become one of us, sharing our life. "I am come" said Jesus Christ, "that they may have life and have it more abundantly." (Jo. 10.10)

It was for this precise purpose that He gave us the Eucharist — to nourish, and strengthen and increase the Divine Life we got at baptism. The

chief channel of Divine Life is the Eucharist. "My flesh is meat indeed. He that eats this bread abides in Me and I in him and I will raise him up on the last day." And lest any of us become indifferent or neglectful, He added a grim warning: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, you shall not have life in you." (Jo.6)

Increasing the Divine Life in us means making us, more and more, all one in Himself. It is the reverse of the food that we assimilate into ourselves. "I will not be changed into you, you will be changed into Me!" (St. Aug.) And who is "Me"? "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?" "Christ and His disciples are one, members of His body, branches abiding in the Vine. Communion means achieving and deepening our union with the whole Christ, with our Elder Brother and with one another in His brotherhood.

That is precisely why we have community singing as we go to achieve Communion. Anyone who would disassociate himself from others at the Eucharist does not understand the full meaning of Communion; rather than communicating, he could be described as excommunicating himself! Concern for others, intense unselfish concern is the precise result of Communion, even as it is the one necessary preparation on which Christ Our Lord existed.

Thank God the number of communicants at each Mass is constantly increasing. When all of us, without a single exception, are at communion every Sunday and fully realize the implications of Communion, that will be the day. Then we'll be sure that we'll gather again as a group, as a family sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob in the everlasting banquet. "He that eats this bread shall live forever."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (June 15)

"Cast upon Him all your anxiety, because He it is Who takes care of you."

There is a saying: "Love finds a way." This is true above all, of the infinite love of God our Father for us. How could we, finite limited creatures, ever know or love the Infinite God? How could God carry out His desire to have us his children know and love Him? The way He chose was the way that true love always chooses, the way of self-giving. He wanted us to share His life. Very well, He would first share our life.

None less than God can know God as He is. No one but himself could love Him as He deserves. When He created the first people, the Holy Trinity was the model. "Let us make man to our own image and likeness". But, we lost that divine life through sinful pride. And what did God do? He became a man. He united one Person, Christ, divinity and humanity, bringing divinity down to man, He lifted humanity up to God. "God became man, in order that man might become divine." (St. Aug.)

Christ's actions were those of a man—working, eating, sleeping, thinking, suffering, yet everyone of these was divine, even the most simple and seemingly insignificant. A divine Person made them His own. And at baptism, he previously incorporated us into Himself, so that all our actions can become divine. If we unite our lives to His this happens. "I am the vine", He said, "you are the branches. He that abides in Me, the same bears much fruit. "He is the vine that grows between heaven and earth. He is the link between humanity and divinity, and we also in Him, have as it were a foot in heaven. We are become, as St. Peter says: "sharers in the divine nature."

The encouragement that this should give us is immeasurable. God having given us His own Son; what good thing is there that we might fear He could deny us? Has He not with Him given us all good things? We should have unbounded courage and confidence, unlimited trust. Every single thing we do is an action of Christ. He lives in us, acts in us, prays in us, if only we allow him to do so. Dramatic events form a tiny part of our lives, its mostly humdrum, trite things we do. But done in Christ and really by Christ, they are not trite things, they have a divine value.

And how we should be encouraged in our efforts for the betterment of our brothers and sisters in Christ! We are not alone, He is with us. Think like Christ, not in terms of our own little world, our own individual needs, but in terms of the big wide world, of all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Pray for all, without exception, especially anyone whom we naturally dislike.

Go out to all. Don't expect them to come to us. The days of a ghetto mentality are over. None of us may think of salvation as something that concerns us privately—we just have to go out as the Scriptures describes it into the highways and lanes. At least give witness to the joy of Christian living, to the confidence we feel in him Who spanned His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

He urged us to go out to the whole world, and launch us into the deep, but to the assurance that He is with us all days.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (June 22)

Restoration of everything in Christ

Creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the Son or God. (Epistle)

Needless to say, creation considered in itself is good. God made everything and "saw that it was all good". There is a danger in our becoming too engrossed, too preoccupied with acquiring wealth for its own sake, or seek-

ing power or pleasure regardless of God, but these things in themselves are not bad. Provided we don't let money or status or pleasure dominate our lives, they are good.

Why? Because God made them. And because the coming of Christ, God's emptying of Himself to become one of us, gave back meaning and sense to creation, disrupted and shattered by Adam's rebellion. God's plan, "to restore all things in Christ" is being carried out now.

Obviously, God's work is not yet completed. We deceive ourselves, and deny reality, if we said that the world is perfect. Until each one of us is completely given over to Christ, there will be cruelty, injustice, unhappiness. But, if each of us strives with all his might to make the world a better place, will do what God wants, putting order where there was chaos, bringing in love to take the place of hatred and selfishness.

Remember we will not do this alone. No one, not even the President could do such a task alone. The Vatican Council reminds us: "It has pleased God to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people." A single hair of a broom, taken by itself is quite useless for sweeping. But, put many such hairs together, and you will produce results. Or, a single strand of rope material—you could break it between your fingers. But many strands together, and you have a rope that can hold a ship.

As today's Epistle reminds us, we are to look forward with eager expectation to the perfection of creation, and spurred on by this hope realizing that we are the children of a common Father, to work in union, so that people, our brothers and sisters, destined for a family life in our ultimate home, will agree to love and help one another, to be concerned about one another's well-being and salvation.

While it is true that we are condemned to frustration here and now if this were a completely perfect world, there would be no need to work for a better one. We have begun to reap our spiritual harvest, we have the Holy Spirit now, a guarantee of our inheritance and we eagerly await the second coming of Christ, when, with creation perfectly completed and fulfilled, He Our Brother will hand us all over to the Father, and God the Father will be all in all.

Meanwhile, with unbounded courage and confidence, let us, in spite of every reverse, keep striving might and main to further Christ's cause that all may be one, to remove the scandal of disunity, selfishness, cruelty and hatred from the face of the earth.

FEAST OF STS. PETER AND PAUL (June 29)

"The Lord has sent his Angel and rescued me from the power of Herod." (Epistle)

Today, the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, we are reminded of the Providence of God our Father, Who knows the number of hairs on our head, and without whose knowledge, not even a sparrow dies. His care of us reaches into every moment of our lives. "Lord, You have brought me and you know me—You know where I sit and where I stand" (Ps. 138,1-2)

God our Father knows more about us than we know about ourselves. If only we had faith in this, our surrender to Him would be complete. Let's ask ourselves: "Am I ready to write my name at the bottom of a blank sheet of paper and let God fill it up, trusting that no matter how great the task, or its difficulties or burdens, he will sustain me? Dag Hamerskjold used to pray: "For what has happened Lord, thanks and for whatever is coming up, yes."

We've just heard the account of Peter's delivery from prison and chains and his being restored to freedom. God's dealing with us is no less amazing, even if less spectacular. In His redeeming love, in sending His Son, He broke our chains, and gave us the liberty of sons.

The Church over which Christ placed Peter as His visible representative and which he promised would never be subdued by the forces of Hell (Gospel), is sometimes accused of being out of touch with the realities of life. Seeing bitter wars and poverty and seemingly senseless sufferings, people without faith become gloomy pessimists. No Christian can be caught up in this tide of despair and bitter frustration.

The world is not like cigar-ash, tossed away indifferently without a thought of where it will fall or what will happen to it. God has intervened in the world and is still acting "Until now my Father works and I work," said Jesus. God's providence is as active on our lives as it was in St. Peter's and St. Paul's

To be joyfully confident is a challenge. It's so easy to be discouraged. Sure, none of us had done as much for Christ as he could have, all of us have well-founded regrets that we could have been better Christians, much more concerned about others. But, this must never paralyze us into despair. It's never too late to start—the whole of a Christian's life is a continued conversion. Like a child learning to walk, stumbling, falling sometimes, but always picking itself up to keep on trying, that's how we go home to God.

Wringing your hands is a waste of valuable time. Forgetting the things that are behind, as St. Paul says, we press forward for the things that are

ahead! God draw Christ alive and glorious from the apparent failure of death, and He will draw new life out of our past defeats.

May God grant, through the intercession of Sts. Peter and Paul, that we'll have a Christian confidence, a Christian joy, a Christian awareness of the loving Providence of God, our Father.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (July 6)

Mass—a Family Reunion

"Taking the leaves, He gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to distribute."

The description of this miracle, using the very words that described the first Eucharist, calls to mind the central event of our Christian lives, our gathering here for Mass, our family reunion, our weekly get-together. At the end of the last week and the beginning of this, we gather around this altar-table, to recall what God has done for us, listening to the story of His sending His Son, and the account of that Son's life, death and resurrection.

Not that we stay stranded 20 centuries away from this Event. At the Consecration, it becomes present here and now—It happens *now* and we, the members of His Family are drawn into this great Happening, specially if the round of the celebration (as we should) be communicating. This as the Church recently reminded us (Ins. on the Eucharist, 3-a) an anticipation, a looking forward to, a "toasting" of the first Banquet in the Kingdom of our Father.

It was to family reunion, the Jewish Paschal meal, for which everyone who could went home, that Jesus chose as the setting for the first Mass—the Sacrificial meal that would be our weekly get-together as God's family. We gather to be reminded of our oneness in Christ. But we don't just call it to mind. We make it actually present here and now and look forward to its culmination in Heaven.

Our union with one another reaches its peak in the Mass. All we are one body, all who partake of one bread. When we answer "Amen" to the words "The Body of Christ", we mean a lot more than just a belief that Christ's Body is there in the last under the appearance of bread. We mean that we are attaining union with the whole Christ, head, members, with everyone united with Him in love, with all who are identified with Him, with His Mother and His Saints, with the souls in Purgatory, with every sincere Christian on earth, and therefore with one another.

"Because the bread is one," says St. Paul, "we though many individuals, are one body, all who partake of one bread." We're not to join in this family reunion without first striving to have a union of spirit. Not only that it's meant to be a source of a deepening of this union, an increasing awareness of our need to live lives of unselfish service of our brethren.

This is what the Mass is all about—every week we come to contact Him, to let him reach out to us, be presented to us as a model of Service. With His life-giving power, we go from Mass with a new meaning given to our existence, we start afresh to live a Christian life, loving and serving our brethren.

We must do this, this is Christianity. It's on this that we'll be judged. It's not easy, in fact it's beyond our unaided individual strength. But, we have the source in our unity as a family, recalled and brought about by this, our weekly reunion as the Family of God.

It's not the final Banquet, but a preparation for the Eternal Reunion in Heaven. The union of the crowd who ate the miraculous bread in today's Gospel was a foreshadowing of the Mass. The Mass in turn is a foreshadowing of the final triumphant hour when all are gathered at the Eternal Homecoming.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (July 13)

Sunday Christmas

"It is not the man who say to me. "Lord, Lord" who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does my heavenly Father's well."

Religion is the service of a son, not the burden of a slave. It should be a joyful thing, a proof of our love for Christ. To see people fulfilling a bare minimum of obligations—daily prayers, Mass each Sunday, Sacraments occasionally—and that because they have to, is extremely sad. It is heart-breaking, because there is no joy, no eagerness, no enthusiasm. And religion is much more than outward observances. These are means to an end—and the end is that we intensify our efforts to bring Christ to men.

He has told us that just saying "Lord, Lord" to Him will not secure salvation for us. If we just drag ourselves to Mass, recite a few prayers mechanically, we deserve His rebuke: "These people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from Me." And even if our prayer is sincerely said, it must not be just be for our own private delectation, our personal spiritual flattering. Doing the will of God, being witnesses and workers to "bring the world to Christ, these must be the intention and the result of our devotions.

Today's Gospel tells us clearly that those who do nothing for the spread of God's Kingdom cannot expect to live in it. If we follow Christ merely because He offers contentment in this life and eternal happiness in the next, or just because He has shown how not to be crushed by the trials of this world, or because of favors hope from Him, we're falling far short of the mark. We must, as far as we are able, cooperate in His work, Christianizing our world. We must each of us, do all we can to create a Christian social order, a Christian attitude to marriage and the family, to politics, to work, to recreation. Otherwise, our religion is a shell, an empty thing, it will not please God and will get us nowhere.

The fact that so many who go through the motions of religious practices on Sunday are selfish, lazy, unjust for the rest of the week is a scandal. How many use them as an alibi for their own lack of interest, and their cynical skepticism. God grant that these people will realize the harm they do, letting Christ down in the eyes of others.

Our religion must be much more than a prop or programme for Sundays, it must be a way of life. And then, it is automatically an apostolate. "So let your light shine before men that they see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven."

Every Catholic is a public relations officer for the Church. A genuine Catholic, aware of what being a son of God means and showing true concern for the progress of God's family advertizes the beauty of the faith, attracting others to it. The pagans among whom the early Christians lived found themselves forced to exclaim: "See how these Christians love one another." In fact, this concern will be for our times no less than for them a sign, a proof, of what religion has to offer. Remember the prayer at the first Mass. "That they may be one, even as we are that the world may know, that you have sent Me." (Jo. 17)

EIGHT SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (July 20)

The Sacraments—Signs of Holiness

"All who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God." (Epistle)

We are all aware that we contact Christ in His Church, specially in the Sacraments. Since His Ascension, he is no longer visible; we can't offer Him a drink as the Samaritan woman did, or climb a tree to see Him, like Zacheus did, or physically touch Him like Mary Magdalene did. We can and do talk to Him in prayer, but not face to face like the thief on the cross. We all know the amazing effect of these meetings, these contacts with Christ. But, we need not envy those people of 2,000 years ago. Our contact with Christ in the Sacraments is no less real, no less personal, no less effective. It is through the Sacraments that He is with us all days.

I wonder, do we realize that it is through the Holy Spirit that we have the Sacraments? That it is in water and the Holy Spirit that we reborn to the divine life on the day of our Baptism? That it was the Holy Spirit's action that brought that life to maturity when we were confirmed? That the power to forgive sins was given when the Holy Spirit was breathed into the Apostles by the Risen Lord? And so on for every Sacrament, each is an action of the Holy Spirit.

Before He died, Jesus promised that He would not leave us orphans, that He would send the Holy Spirit. Remember He had said it was necessary for Him to be glorified before the Holy Spirit could be sent of this earthly life it was recorded: The Holy Spirit was not yet given: because Jesus was not yet glorified. "Unless I go," He said, "the Holy Spirit cannot come. But if I go, I will send Him to you."

Maybe you'll wonder why Pentecost is the pivotal day in the Church's year. Today, for instance is the 8th Sunday after Pentecost, is what, through the coming of the Holy Spirit we are given Christ as our Brother and God as our Father. And the Holy Spirit, the ever-flowing love between them both is what makes the Divine Life of the Adorable Trinity lived right within us.

This is beyond our understanding—in fact, if we fully realize it, we would die of wonder. Through the Holy Spirit, we love the Father with the very love with which Christ loves the Father. And the Father in turn loves us, identified with Christ as we are, with the very love with which He loves Christ.

It is in the Sacraments that we receive the Holy Spirit and His gifts. They are the signs of the activity of the Spirit of the Son whom the Father has sent into our hearts. When we see a sign, we realize that it represents some reality. You see a sign on the road "Men at work" and you slow down your car to avoid injuring the workers, the reality pointed out by the sign. When you see a Sacrament administered, your faith should tell you that the Holy Spirit is at work, giving or increasing the Christian life in someone.

Then we will call on Him, constantly and fervently: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love."

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (July 27)

Don't Fear Failure

"God is my helper, the Lord sustains my life." (Epistle)

We are urgently invited, specially since the Council, to be Apostles of our faith and bring Christ's love and life to our fellowmen. In fact, the Coun-

cil took us back to the Gospel, reminding us that Christianity is an unselfish sowing of Christ in others. It is hard to see Christ in one who does not appeal to us, to see underneath the appearances to search for the spark of goodness in an unattractive person.

But there is something that is harder. Many of us never start because we never overcome our fear of failure. We fear we would just waste our time, getting nowhere, even being disheartened when our efforts are ignored, or rejected altogether.

The task seems so enormous, such a mountain of abuses, so terribly much selfishness, apathy, lack of interest in God that we feel at times: what can I do? We forget that we are not alone, that He is with us, and that in Christ's service, there is no such thing as final failure.

Look at Christ Himself. He did not succeed with Judas, or with the many others who rejected His words, who turned away and did not walk with Him anymore. (Jn. 6) His life ended an outward failure. As He like a criminal on a cross, defied by His enemies, abandoned by all except His mother and a very few friends, by all human standards, He had failed miserably... But then came Resurrection and after the Resurrection, Pentecost. And after Pentecost, the spread of His Church to every part of the world.

So, do not fear failure. Fear not, little flock," He said, "it has pleased your Father to prepare for you a Kingdom." Keep sowing the seed, even though some of it fall the wayside, some among thorns, some on a rock, some of it will fall on good ground, and bear fruit a hundred fold.

No one is promising us 100% success. Only a child expects to see 100% on his test papers. We will meet with rejection, and the rebuffs will make us smart. But to stop trying, to say: "Never again" just because we've been hurt, because our unselfishness was misinterpreted or rejected, this would be a terrible tragedy for ourselves, and for those whose very salvation may, in God's Providence, depend on us.

Let's be realistic. Living a Christian life, loving all, even our enemies without exception, doing good to those who hate us, is not easy. It was never meant to be. "Take up your cross daily..." "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground dies, it remains by itself alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Effort, possible frustration and disappointment, death of self are involved. By ourselves we could not endure such life. Jesus knew this. That's why He sent His Holy Spirit: "Don't let your hearts be troubled and afraid. When the Spirit comes, He will guide you in all truth."

Christ is with us, the Holy Spirit is working through us. Be convinced of this and never will we be "overcome by that noon-day devil—"ningas cogon."