

Homily on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

The Trinity does not need to be understood.

The Trinity tells us who God is. As revealed in the Creeds, it also describes our cosmology, telling us how faith permeates the universe. The great saints of our tradition saw the Trinity in everything, and we are all somewhat familiar with Trinitarian analogies. One famous example involves Mary Magdalene. According to Orthodox tradition, after the Resurrection and Ascension, Mary continued her mission as a disciple of Jesus, boldly presenting herself before the Emperor Tiberius Caesar in Rome. She gave him an egg, saying, “Christ is risen.” He laughed, telling her that Christ had no more risen than the egg in her hand was red. Legend has it that the egg turned red, the emperor heard Mary’s grievance about Pontius Pilate putting Jesus to death, and then removed him from Jerusalem under imperial displeasure. Such narratives are admittedly hagiographical, meaning deliberately written to transmit theological truths. So what can we learn from this tradition, and what about eggs helps us understand the Trinity?

Besides describing the origin of Easter eggs, we know that eggs symbolize creation, spring, and rebirth. After Christ’s Resurrection, eggs took on new meaning for Christians, representing new life breaking forth, while leaving the empty tomb behind. We also know that ontologically, eggs are trinitarian, consisting of shells, whites, and yolks. The same holds true for people, who are composed of body, mind, and spirit. We are unified totalities, and cannot be separated without ceasing to be who we are. So it is with God, who is rightly acknowledged as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This knowledge is divinely revealed to us, and is something we can really understand about God.

Yet at the same time, we know that the Trinity doesn't need to be understood, only loved and obeyed. Moreover, just because we can *understand* what has been revealed to us, we cannot hope to ever *comprehend* who God is as God. Like life itself, the Trinity is a mysterious totality about which our knowledge will remain infinitesimal. The Trinity is wholly other and separate from life as it perpetually unfolds, even while constantly permeating the world by answering our prayers. This mystery can never be fully comprehended, which is fortunate, for we thereby remain teachable. Without teachability, or openness to being led by God, perfectionism and scrupulosity could become clear and present dangers in uncountable ways.

While I will not claim the following thoughts as completely original, I do have my own Trinitarian analogy, built on these assumptions: what we know, what we don't know, and what we don't know we don't know. What we know is obvious: our names, spouses, careers, etc. What we don't know is also apparent enough, for none of us know how to do everything. Yet knowing what we don't know is still a kind of understanding, for we can at least identify categories we are unfamiliar with, such as math, or marriage.

Acknowledging that we don't know what we don't know is where the colored dye of our belief connects to the eggshell of faith, so to speak. By making this acknowledgment, we identify an incomprehensible shadow realm that exists in every one of us (the egg is much larger than it appears). When we prayerfully offer up our total selves to the Trinity in love and obedience, even those parts we cannot comprehend enough to know that they actually exist, we come to know God more intimately and ourselves more thoroughly. Gradually we discern him revealing our blind corners and

projections to us, helping us to navigate through them all while we do our best to cooperate with fulfilling, and not impeding, the will of God.

Living a Trinitarian life is remaining in the question and staying open to life as it unfolds. It is more about being in relationship with others than being a certain way within ourselves, more about being led and participating than being in charge, more about living in the open spaces that come up through the cracks that life makes in our plans. Like the hidden flaws in an eggshell, these cracks represent being surprised by God. When we become aware of those cracks, those unknown regions we don't even know about, God often communicates to us loudly and clearly from them. Through these unknown unknowns, we gradually become habituated to receiving unfamiliar graces and new capacities as the Trinity reveals more of both himself and ourselves.

As aforementioned, eggs themselves are trinitarian, especially when pressuring the cracks breaks them wide open. Had the Son himself not been broken, the egg of faith would never have completed its purpose of becoming new life, and we would not even know who the Trinity is. This complete and total being, this God who we accurately understand as the Holy Trinity, will always be in relationship with us, even while remaining incomprehensible and mysterious. This reflects how we will always need to remain teachable and open to life, in so many ways that cannot be predicted in advance.

Trinity Sunday reminds us who God is. It also encourages us to get out of our shells, or any artifices that keep our faith from fully magnifying and breaking out into the world. Let us fling ourselves into the arms of the Holy Trinity, trusting him with our unknown unknowns, and may the colored dye of our belief always hold fast to the divine, true Easter egg of our faith, Jesus Christ our Lord, Second Person of the Holy Trinity.