

Homily for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

One of my favourite parts of being a deacon is celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism; and I have been privileged recently to have officiated at a baptism at Godshill recently, and have three others "in the pipeline", one of which being the first baby of a couple I married last year!

A baptism is typically a joyous occasion...a day of tremendous possibility and hope, even more so than a wedding. At a wedding, it's often the dress, the party and the cake. But at a baptism, it's all about the child. It's about a new life being welcomed into the church; and even if a baby is crying its lungs out, nothing can go wrong, because at that instant, that baby is perfect. Baptism makes each of us spotless; as the ritual puts it: we become a new creation.

So why am I talking about baptism on Trinity Sunday? It's because there is something very particular, very specific, about the baptism ritual in the words that are spoken which are relevant to today's celebration...."I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit". This is known as the "Trinitarian formula" and without it a baptism is not considered to be valid.

If you want a reminder of how important the Trinity is in the life of faith, **that** is it. From the very beginning of our lives as Christians, we are sealed in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and it signifies the extraordinary importance the Church places on this singular belief - one God, in three persons.

That is one of the reasons we celebrate this feast, one week after Pentecost: because the Trinity has been revealed to the world as Father, Son and Spirit - and we mark this great gift on this day.

This morning, as mass always does, we began with doing something that most of us probably take for granted, and hardly think about. We do it so often...it's the sign of the cross.

In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Making the sign of the cross is not just a gesture that we use to punctuate prayer, although it has been described to me as being like "addressing the envelope" to God as we start to pray. It's not just a sign of our being Catholic Anglicans. It is a re-statement of our baptism.

However long ago it was, these words were said over each one of us as water was poured on our heads...the first words that made us members of the Body of Christ. These are the same words we speak again as we make the sign of the cross. We brand ourselves with God in three

persons. And whatever we do or say afterwards is in the name of the Father...and the Son...and the Holy Spirit.

Let's just think about what that simple gesture means.

We touch our heads for the Father – the one who created us. This is where we began, in the mind of God, the Creator of our beautiful world. That finger on my forehead is a reminder not only of a Creator but of God who loves us so much that He sent His only Son to draw us back into His presence. This is the same Father we speak of as "Our Father who art in Heaven."

We touch our hearts for the Son – the one whose unceasing love took him to the cross, and the one who taught us, as well, how to love through his own Sacred Heart; and he gave the ultimate and agonizing proof of His love for us on the cross.

John 3:16 is probably one of the most well know verses in scripture..."God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

We touch our shoulders for the Holy Spirit – the one who gives us strength, on whose shoulders we are carried, and who enables us to be God's arms, working on earth. With the Holy Spirit around, no one is ever alone. God through the Holy Spirit is always with us. What we span in blessing, the Holy Spirit strengthens in life so that we may better shoulder our burdens and responsibilities.

In St Augustine's conception of the Trinity, he said, "The Father is the lover. The Son is the loved one. And the Holy Spirit is the love they send forth."

God wants us to find Him. God is not an isolated Being, but a relationship of persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have been told so often that God is love, and the more we understand of love the more we will understand God. The more we understand of God, the closer we come to finding Him.

The heart of the mystery is that God dwells within each of us. God is not just out there somewhere, God is alive within us...in the spiritual life that makes a human a child of God. Jesus promised us that He would never leave us alone, and we are not alone. He is with us always, not just outside of us but within us.

And so, we come to the end of the blessing – the joining of hands and the concluding, "Amen." And we remind ourselves that the word "amen" means "so be it;" it is itself an expression of assent, in itself an act of

faith in all that has gone before. And so with my "amen" I renew my faith. I believe in you...Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When we make the sign of the cross, and pray the sign of the cross with those words, we make of ourselves an offering, and a prayer. We embody what the Trinity represents, and we strive to bring that with the example of our lives and with our actions to all those we meet.

We do it in the name of God – all that God is, all that God does. We do it in the name of the Trinity

Deacon Gregory Cecere, A Roman Catholic Deacon, wrote this, "May all the signs of the cross we ever make be nothing less than a proclamation of our belief in a God who has been revealed to us as Trinity; as Father, Son and Spirit. May it signal our willingness to share that love with others. May the hands we join in faith be generous in giving and eager in helping others. May the shared life and love of the Trinity be reflected in us – the real meaning of the Most Holy Trinity in our lives.

And may God bless us all in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". Amen.