

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity – Cycle C
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception – June 16, 2019
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Over the years, I have spoken about the advances of technology and my discomfort with that. If you have shopped for a television lately – or, I suppose I should say, if you have shopped for the video component to your home theatre system lately – then you know what I mean. I am old enough to remember when the television repairman used to visit our home with a suitcase full of replacement tubes. Now days, there seem to be no tubes left in a modern TV – and repairmen are a thing of the past in our disposable society. No longer do we adjust the rabbit ears or the roof-top antenna. Now the challenge is to hook up the monitor to the DVD player to the satellite receiver to the personal computer to the home theatre system. And once all of those are together, you have to figure out which of the fifteen remotes – controls which component or you have to program a massive remote with seemingly thousands of buttons. Fifty years ago this summer, the Saturn V rocket took our astronauts to the moon with simpler technology than is found on most remote control panels these days. And the sad part is that – even if I knew what all of these buttons did – I can't for the life of me use the fancy, expensive remote without first reaching for my dollar-store reading glasses. Yes, technology has moved forward and, believe it or not, this march has much to tell us about our relationship with the Trinity.

You see, most of us approach the Trinity in the same way that we approach modern technology. Some people revel in technology – determined to figure everything out. These are the people who can install hardware and software and everything in between. They know the latest jargon and, if they encounter something that is new, they study and reason and experiment with it until they have mastered it. By contrast, those of us of a certain age or mindset, approach technology as though it were a foreign language with no written alphabet. Oh, sure, once upon a time I mastered the difference between 78, 45 and 33 1/3, but you cannot expect me to download music files. You cannot take a vinyl LP mind into a digital music world. And so – at some point – we just give up. We recognize that the rest of the world may be digitally enhanced, but we are content with “low-tech.” Rather than mastering technology, we'll just sit back and read a book and occasionally crank up the Victrola – or so it must seem to outsiders.

And so it is with the Trinity. Some people encounter the mystery of the Trinity and are determined to figure it all out. They ponder the relationship among Father and Son and Spirit with great zeal – determined to define who these persons

are, determined to figure out what makes this Trinity tick. And invariably, they leave disappointed. God, you see, defies definition. We can reach insights about God, but we cannot fully comprehend him. Jesus recognizes this in our gospel today – telling the disciples that there is so much more to teach them though they could not bear it. It would be the Spirit who would lead them, lead us, gradually to the truth. You see, the more we learn about the Trinity, the more we realize that we don't know – and try as we might, we will never be able to define God, to completely understand him in the way that some can master modern technology. By contrast, some people seem so bewildered by the mystery of the Trinity that they forget about it altogether. Oh, they recognize that there are Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are each God and who are all one God, but the depth of the mystery is off-putting. They back away, sensing that everything is too complicated – much in the way that I avoid downloading any more apps to my phone until I have at least figured out how to use the ones that came with it. It is more than I can take in.

The best approach to the Trinity, of course, is in the middle. We should not approach God as someone we can define, as someone we can master, as a problem that we can solve, because we will ultimately be disappointed. But we must not avoid contemplating God just because he is beyond us. We should not shy away from reflecting upon the mystery of the Trinity just because we cannot understand it. God is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be celebrated. Indeed, the magnificence of the Trinity – the family who is God – has much to teach us. We hear in the first reading from Proverbs the loving companionship between the Father and the Wisdom of God – which is one way the Scriptures describe the Spirit. Their peaceful, playful relationship should encourage and comfort us. In a similar way, our second reading from Romans reminds us that the love of God which binds together the Trinity brings us hope – hope that we too will be welcomed one day into the eternal happiness of that loving community. These images, and so many more, call us to prayerful reflection on Father, Son and Holy Spirit, on the intimate unity found in the Trinity. We will not solve the mystery of the Trinity – but we will be comforted and enriched by our contemplation. God, hope, St. Paul tells us, never disappoints.