

**“Really Knowing God Means Knowing The Holy Trinity”
(Matthew 28:19)**

For Your Life in Christ the Week of Holy Trinity Sunday, 6-19-11
Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)
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Introduction: Sacred Doctrine Can Be Challenging!

- A. There is an element of our sacred faith that can seem academic and irrelevant: *doctrine*.
- B. Why is doctrine so important? Why is the teaching of God’s Word so essential? I mean does it really impact our day-to-day life? It absolutely makes all the difference! At least it ought to!
- C. One of those things that can seem like doctrine for the sake of doctrine is The Holy Trinity.
- D. But we must take a different perspective: Since this is the way God reveals Himself to us, this is the way for *really knowing* who He is! If we are serious about having a personal relationship with Him, we need to know *Him*!

Illustration: Today is Father’s Day and I have one earthly dad that I thank God for on this Father’s Day. This past week was tough, but it reminded me of how much I love my dad! There is only *one*. No one can ever claim that he is someone other than who he really is. If they did, I for one would be insulted! The point is that *true identity is extremely important, especially for a loving relationship: the parties that love each other must really KNOW each other!*

- E. The same is true for God *and it makes all the difference in the world whether you REALLY know Him or you just claim to know Him. We must know Him as He says He is!*

Part I: But The World Criticizes Who God Says He Is!

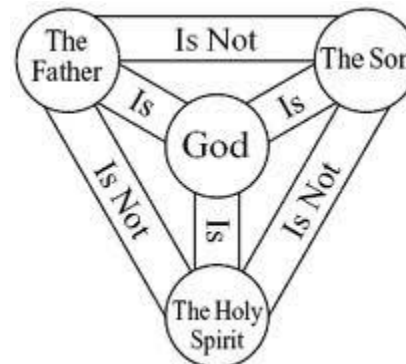
- A. Sometimes to describe the Holy Trinity we say, “three persons in one God,” and the world responds to this concept of “three in one” as non-sense.
- B. Why? Because sinful reason is put over the Word of God.
- C. St. Augustine, however, had the right attitude about the matter:

“in no other subject [than the Holy Trinity] is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more profitable.”
(NPNF, First Series, Vol. 3, 19)

- D. And why did St. Augustine say this? He said it because to know the Holy Trinity is to really know God; but if we don’t know the Holy Trinity, then we don’t know God.
- E. What I just said is intolerable to our post-modern culture: I’ve made an absolute statement and our world today rejects the assertion that absolute truth exists. The world wants to say that whatever anyone says about God is “true for them.”
- F. But dear Christians, this is an entirely nonsensical statement as it totally contradicts the law of identity: A = A. I can never say, “Doug is Eric,” or “Paul is Chris,” or “Sylvia is Linda”. And everyone knows that this law holds true, but they want to change it when it comes to God. We don’t have the right to do that!

Part II: A Primer For Introducing The Holy Trinity

- A. Matthew 28:19 teaches the THREE PERSONS of the Holy Trinity.
- B. Deuteronomy 6:4 teaches the ONE ESSENCE or SUBSTANCE of God.
- C. It has been said that the WHO of God is “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” while the WHAT of God is that He is ONE.
- D. The Trinity Diagram:



- E. Illustrations (remember they are limited):

1. From Tertullian (early 3rd cent. AD, ANF, Volume 3, 603):
 - a. Root – Tree – Fruit, but ONE TREE
 - b. Fountain – River – Stream, but ONE WATER
 - c. Sun – Ray – Apex of the Ray, but ONE LIGHT
2. From Augustine (early 4th cent. AD, see above ref.):
 - a. Memory – understanding – will, but ONE MIND
 - b. Love: “the lover, that which is loved, and love [between the two],” but ONE LOVE
- F. That is to say that relation and substance are *two different things*. Thus, “3 in 1” is completely logical. For example, consider $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. The factors and the product are distinct, and the equation is true.

Part III: OK, But What About The Relevancy To Life?

Lenski quotes Rohnert in Lenski’s *The Interpretation of Matthew*: “by baptism God gives himself to us: the Father becomes our Father and adopts us as his children (Gal. 3:16-27; John 1:12, 13; 1 John 3:1); the Son becomes our Redeemer, for we are baptized in union with his death and cleansed by his blood to be his own (Eph. 5:26) and have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13), so that his righteousness is our glorious dress (Matt. 22:11; Isa. 61:10), and we are members of his body (Eph. 5:30; 1 Cor. 12:13; John 15:4); the Holy Spirit becomes our Comforter and the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14; II Cor. 11:22), we become his temple in which together with the Father and the Son he dwells (1 Cor. 3:10). In this way we assume a new relation to God by means of this sacrament of regeneration, our heart and our spirit being renewed and pursuing a new direction through the joint operation of the three divine persons.” (1176-1177)

- A. This is truly an impressive description of our relationship with the Holy Trinity. However, I would like to get a little more practical.
- B. There are different *prepositions* that are used to describe your relationship with each of the PERSONS of the Holy Trinity:

1. You pray TO the Father.
2. Your life is now IN the Son, Jesus Christ.
3. You walk WITH and are empowered BY the Holy Spirit.

C. In respect to your Heavenly Father:

Matthew 6:6: “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

1. Our prayers are directed TO the Father.
2. This means that we know that God LOVES us!

Psalm 103:13: “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.”

3. And TO the Father means we know He has all power to help us!

Psalm 124:8: “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

D. In respect to your Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God:

2nd Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

1. Your being in Christ, means that all that once stood against you to condemn you and fill you with guilt, shame, and fear has been covered by the Lord’s perfect righteousness for you. His death and resurrection COVERS YOU!
2. So as far as God is concerned: YOU ARE BRAND NEW! Live with this confidence and truth!

E. In respect to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Counselor:

Ephesians 5:18: “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.”

AND

Galatians 5:16: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

1. God empowers you by being with you and in you!
2. The Holy Spirit comforts and counsels by the Word!

Conclusion: We Should Therefore Rejoice in The Holy Trinity!