

Trinity Sunday - May 26, 2013
Text: John 8:48-59
Theme: "Understanding is Overrated"

As many of you know, I mock many things people do because we are so ridiculous. But above most things I mock, I mock every attempt at explaining the Holy Trinity. It is a concept far beyond our reach intellectually or spiritually. There are things about God that we simply accept because he is God and that is what he tells us. How can he physically move through water, through bread and wine, through his Word? It makes no logical sense, and yet he does. Likewise, how can he be three persons yet one God. People often say that we will understand these matters when we get to heaven but I am not sure about that. Even in heaven we are still human and he is still God and I don't know that we will understand then either. I suppose we just won't care anymore.

I know that this side of heaven we will definitely never understand it and it is best not to try to explain things we cannot understand. Hear me well. I am not saying that it is best not to try to explain things that we don't fully understand yet but are capable of understanding, things like how gene therapy might prevent disease. I am saying it is best not to try to explain things that we are not capable, ever, of understanding. That is where heresy comes in. We have a tendency to play theological telephone. Remember

playing telephone as kids? You sit in a circle and whisper a story into the ear of the person next to you and then he whispers it to the person next to him and so forth and so on until you get to the end of the circle and the last person tells the story out loud. It is usually quite different at the end than it started at the beginning.

It's a fun game because it shows us how whenever we encounter a situation for which we have no hard data, we just make stuff up to fill in the gap. Funny as a game with a bunch of kids, but dangerous with theology. A good example of this is "limbo of the infants."

There are many Christians walking the earth today who believe that "limbo of the infants" is a teaching of the Church. That is, they believe that the Church teaches that babies who die unbaptized go to a special place where they are deprived of the full benefits of heaven, because they were not Baptized, but a place of no punishment because they had not reached an age in which they could intentionally sin. This is not now nor has it ever been a teaching of the Holy Catholic Church of which we are a part. This heresy comes from human beings trying to explain something they have no business explaining.

I learned long ago as a parent and a teacher that expectations do not need consequences attached to them. My kids don't get gifts based on the work they complete and they don't work around the house out of fear of not receiving gifts. They get gifts as I choose to give it to them and the work they do is disconnected from the gift. The work they do is their gift to the household.

In our relationship with God, Baptism is a gift from him. He doesn't say, "Take this gift or else!" Rather he offers the gift and it is his full expectation that we will receive it. But someone asked the question, what if a baby did not receive the gift before it died? There is no answer for that. But because human beings have a hard time trusting God to do whatever is right, they made up the story of "limbo of the infants" and began teaching it as though it were doctrine.

When we don't have an explanation, it is best to say, "I don't know. God does not tell us that." We are faced in this world with people who demand an explanation of the Trinity. The Muslims and Jews, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses all deny the Trinity and demand from us an explanation if we confess believing such nonsense. We cannot allow ourselves to be backed into that corner.

Watch what Jesus did when the Jews tried to corner him and tie him up in knots with their false theology. He simply kept confessing the truth. He did not try to explain anything to them. He proclaimed God's Word and stopped. Either the Word would work or it wouldn't but no amount of explanation will melt a frozen heart. Only the Word of God can do that but in the end people have free will and you have to be prepared to walk away if they refuse to hear God's Word.

The Word of God, all by itself, has power. The Word of God is enough. We pray to God to keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from adversities and we have no need to defend or explain God. He is big enough to take care of himself. We have only to receive his gifts of his Word and his Sacraments and rejoice as they do their work within us of forgiving our sins and strengthening our faith.