

Holy Trinity 2024
John 3:1-17 (ESV)

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

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

A blessed feast of the Most Holy Trinity to each and every one of you today, dear ones. Today we stand in awe and marvel as we contemplate what is the highest mystery of our common Christian faith—that our Lord is not distant and unknown, but precisely that He has made Himself known to us and even given us intimate knowledge of Himself as He truly is from eternity: three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—united in one undivided essence.

And we bask in this knowledge, that we rightly know and are known by the one true God. We’re quite right to confess what He’s revealed about Himself as we did so beautifully through the words of the Athanasian Creed—a creed which captures the Trinitarian theology of St. Athanasius, the great bishop of Alexandria, Egypt during the 4th century—a master theologian and a hero of the church.

And you should know, dear ones, that he and many other ancient fathers of the church risked their reputation, their well-being, and sometimes even their very lives in the controversies that arose in their day about the nature of God—and for good reason.

Just imagine for a moment how you’d feel if, for example, someone began to adopt ideas about your spouse that simply aren’t true, and then they began convincing others of these things, and soon, many have come to know a version of your spouse that’s false—it’s not real or true to who they actually are.

And thus, maybe you can see why it was for them, as it is for us, that speaking rightly about the Lord our God is about so much more than simply scoring points in a debate and showing off our erudition. No, we follow the footsteps of the ancient fathers of the church who labored to speak rightly about the Triune God because they so deeply loved Him with their heart, with their mind, and with their strength.

And they wanted each of us also, as their theological descendants and heirs, to know and be known intimately as they were by God the Father through the Son in the Spirit—the same Lord Who made us, Who saves us, and Who freely gives Himself to us, that together we would freely give ourselves to Him and live in communion with Him into the ages of ages.

And so, then, if we are truly to know and be known by the Triune God Who has revealed Himself to us, we must see, from His perspective, what He sees and reveals to be true about us.

The Lord Jesus says in our Gospel lesson today, “unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Dear ones, God's incarnate Son has given us to know that those who are born merely from below, who come forth from fallen flesh—that in the end, they are destined to see and know only what the kingdom of this fallen world does: corruption, and decay, and death. And that's because, due to sin, the sons of this world are themselves immersed in corruption, and decay, and death.

And we do well to meditate on this especially, dear ones: that the Triune God knows not just all the sin and corruption of this world, but also the sin and corruption of our own flesh—every one of us—even that which is hidden in the depths of our hearts, depths which even we do not fully know, not like He does. None of it is hidden from His sight. And over time as those among us who are more experienced in the faith have been made keenly aware of, our Lord will open our eyes to more and more of the sin and corruption within us that He sees and knows—and why it's necessary for us to have received the new birth from above out of water and the Spirit of God, that we would indeed see the kingdom of God and receive the blessed inheritance prepared for His sons.

Dear ones, we're not given all of this from our Gospel lesson for today that we would simply remain condemned in our sins, because as the Son of God Himself says, God didn't send Him for this purpose—No!—but instead that would be saved.

God the Father has loved us and made Himself known to us intimately—perfectly—in His beloved Son, in the One Whom He gave for us, that by His shed blood, and death on the cross, and by His resurrection, our sins would be taken away. And He's also done this so that by His grace, as adopted sons, born from above out of water and the Spirit, we too would know not only the eternal love the Father has for His Son, but also the love the Son has for the Father in the Spirit—us being baptized into and immersed in this perfect, reciprocal love of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, knowing and being known by one another in perfect unity.

This is why we were made, dear ones. Like St. Augustine says, the Triune God has made us for Himself, that we would partake of His divine life together as one.

So think on this today during Holy Communion, that right before your very eyes, you are seeing forgiven sinners and the adopted sons of God partaking of the divine life of the Holy Trinity—children of the kingdom of heaven receiving the Son from the Father in the Spirit.

Think on these things also during your daily life when the opportunity comes to give yourself into the service of your neighbor. Think of the divine, self-sacrificial love you've been immersed in by none other than God Himself. And even if it costs you dearly, even if it's difficult and wearisome, think on the scars of our Lord, that one of the Holy Trinity suffered for us.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

And to the same eternal Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, be all the glory together with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

