

From the PA's Desk

The Solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity:

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. Any time we try to think about the Holy Trinity, we can feel stumped. This doctrine of our faith tells us that there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons. But how can God be both one and three at the same time?

While our understanding of the Trinity has advanced and deepened over the centuries, this dogma of our faith will always remain a mystery. We believe that God is one—one in substance, one in essence, and one in nature. We also believe that the three Persons of the Trinity are consubstantial, that each of them is God, whole and entire.

At the same time, we also believe that God is three "Persons." This doesn't mean that God is three distinct, independent individuals, as human beings are separate persons. No, the distinction between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit doesn't rest in their autonomy, but in the "relationship of each Person to the others" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 252). In other words, God exists in a relationship of love—a love he invites us to share.

Finally, we believe that God created us in his image and likeness. This means that he created us to be relational as well. Jesus' command to love God and one another means that he wants us to strive to be united with each other. He wants us to be as one so that the world can have countless witnesses to the love of God.

So on this great day of celebration, let God's love become your love. Let it move you to forgive those who have hurt you. Let it move you to speak a kind word, offer a blessing, and care for those in need. Let it move you to put aside divisions in your family. Let it move you to become a bright light shining the love of God in a world darkened by alienation and division.

Scripture Today:

In the reading from the Book of Exodus, God renewed his covenant with Moses. His chosen people had broken the first of the Ten Commandments by worshipping the golden calf. In an earlier verse, Moses had smashed the tablets in anger. But God revealed himself as being full of mercy, slow to anger and abounding in faithfulness. He did not withdraw his covenant, instead he renewed it – the tablets were struck again, and the people were forgiven.

God the Father has renewed his covenant with us, his Church – forgiving us our sins – by the saving actions of his Son acting through the power of the Holy Spirit. God's love reveals itself as a Trinitarian love, with all three persons of the one God acting in concert to assist us in this life and to help us one day experience eternal life – God's great design and destiny for us all. God shows himself as a Father of Mercy, in his only Son as a savior, and in his Spirit as a redeemer who is forever renewing his love for us, and allowing us to do the same for him and for each other. Indeed, the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity are woven into the mysteries of the human person. Only when we know who God is are we truly capable of knowing ourselves and each other. Made in the image and likeness of God, we are made in the image and likeness of the Most Holy Trinity. The love we have for one another should then be modeled on the love shared by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Today, Saint Paul concludes his second letter to the Corinthians, wishing the newly formed Christian enclave all the blessings of the Triune God. We begin each Mass with the words the Apostle used to conclude his reflections: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." May the Triune God's great love for us help us mend our ways, encourage one another and greet each other in holy peace.

Alpha: What's Next?

Alpha has come to an end for the year, and I was impressed with how many of our approximately 100 participants said last Monday that they were sad it was ending. My intention is to continue Alpha next year for any Catholics who have not experienced it, or any non-parishioners or non-believers you know of who need a basic introduction to Christianity. A display will be in the back of church soon with one-word thoughts and feelings from those who experienced it this year.

We in the parish also need to create some form of an Evangelization 201 program, which would be an attempt to contact those who were once parishioners here, but for whatever reasons, we don't see around anymore. I've been told by many people that their family members who are Catholic live in this area but they don't attend

Mass anymore. We need to start contacting them to find out why, and to invite them back. Before we can invite non-Catholics to join us, why don't we start with Catholics who have stopped coming for whatever reasons?

Months ago I met with Fr. Bert Gohm who developed an evangelization and outreach program to Catholics in one of his former parishes. We need to develop that approach here. Hopefully we can get teams of parishioners to make a list of those who used to attend, and either contact them by phone, in person, or maybe at their homes, and ask them to return. At the very least, we should ask them what they need from us.

In addition to our evangelization efforts, next year we will start Whole Community Catechesis once a month. Whole Community Catechesis is an opportunity for everyone in the parish (young and older) to come together in fellowship to share breakfast together after Sunday Mass, followed by an hour of catechesis at each person's age appropriate level. As we have witnessed from our Alpha program this year, sit-down meals are a big part of "getting people here," so we naturally will begin Whole Community Catechesis with a meal together.

I would like to also run an eight week program called *Mass Matters: We Are Called to Glory* which will help us better understand the mystery of the Eucharist and how it will change our lives. There is absolutely nothing on earth like a Eucharistic Liturgy, which is the highest form of prayer and thanksgiving to God, and it also makes present the one death and resurrection of Jesus Christ right here and right now. What we do in the Mass is not a cognitive remembering of Jesus' sacrifice from 2000 years ago, but we are united to the very same event from 2000 years ago. We are also connected to the celebration in heaven simultaneously. How many of us who didn't study at a seminary or theology school really realize this? *Mass Matters* can help us understand the power, mystery, and beauty of the Mass as we never have before.

Through the Eucharist we become stamped with the pattern of Christ's own self-giving love so that we can reproduce that pattern in our own lives. Thus the goal of the liturgy is never just to receive the sacrament and go home; it is to become a living tabernacle through which Christ is made present to others. This is why the liturgy ends with words: "Go, you are sent." At every Mass, the Church—that is, all her members—are newly empowered and sent forth to bring Christ into the world.

RCIA – An Invitation:

When you were baptized you became part of a wonderful community learning to love and serve God. You can share that beautiful gift with a friend, neighbor, or relative. Have you noticed someone who is a bit curious about "those Catholics"? Perhaps you know someone, a baptized Catholic, who has drifted away, or isn't quite sure what to think about the Church anymore? The opportunity has arrived for you to extend a personal invitation to those adults and children to come and explore, ask questions, and perhaps begin their faith journey through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

All of us, even the best known people of the Church, began their faith journey because someone cared enough to respond to their spiritual needs and concerns. The RCIA doesn't happen by itself. It's a community event, and YOU are that community. Listen to your inner voice. Be aware of someone around you. Ask someone who may be interested in the Catholic faith to come and see what we are all about. Plant the seed of awakening to a life of Christ in someone's heart. Share the joy of their experience of finding Jesus, that in itself is a true gift from God.

Deacon Ordination:

This Sunday I will be ordained a deacon with eight other men from the diocese. Hopefully it's one more step closer to what God wants me to become for the Church of Saginaw. No doubt I'm here because of the Lord's invitation, but also because of the prayers of many people in my life. I'm grateful to God for his many blessings in my life, and for all of you who are helping me become a better disciple of Jesus Christ. Sometime around 3 or 3:30 pm on Sunday will be prayers of ordination, and if you would say a little prayer for me at that time, I would be grateful. Even a simple Hail Mary prayer will do. If you have a little more time, you can watch the ordination live on the diocesan website www.saginaw.org

CSA 2017:

Our annual Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) campaign has begun. Our quota is about \$45,000. As of this writing, we have collected about \$21,200 in pledges, or about 47% of our goal. I know we can make our quota as we have for the past several years. If you don't have a pledge card for CSA, there are some at the doors of the church. CSA serves the bigger world church and our local diocese. It is worth your support.

I hope you will consider a gift of 1% of your annual income. Money that surpasses our goal comes back to the parish and will be used for future evangelization, youth ministry, and whole community catechesis programs.