

Reflection for the Feast of the Holy Trinity

Recently I was blessed to be celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism for one of the newest members of our Parish, and after I had asked the four questions three to the parents and one to the Godparents, I then turned to the child to be baptized and stated that the Christian community welcomes you with great joy and that I now claim you for Christ by the sign of the cross, I then processed to trace the cross of the child's forehead. As I was making the sign of the cross on this child, I could not help but think that I was most likely not the first person to be blessing this child with the sign of the cross. I found myself briefly looking at the parents, godparents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, knowing in my heart that more than likely everyone of these individuals that were gathered for this baptism had already on numerous occasions blessed this child with the sign of the cross. In fact, I found myself thinking of the fact that the parents had already taken their new-born to mass here at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish and I had already blessed the child myself with the sign of the cross, when his parents came to the Altar for Holy Communion.

Have you ever stopped and wondered how many times in your life you have made the sign of the cross on yourself or someone else? As we think of all the times the countless number of times, may we think of why we were making the sign of the cross. Every time that we have made the sign of the cross on ourselves or someone else there was a reason of that action. The sign of the cross is not something that we do randomly for no reason. The sign of the cross has reason and purpose. The sign of the cross and the words "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen," is how we start our prayers, our communication with the Holy Trinity. But if we leave it here at this basic understanding, then the sign of the cross starts to look like a phone number or e-mail address or maybe in a better light, the salutation in our communication with God.

The sign of the cross is so much more than a starting point in our communication with God. It is a statement of our faith and a statement of the love that God has for us. This simple prayer that is a part of our daily lives reminds us of our Triune God. This prayer also reminds us of the two natures of Jesus Christ, that Christ came into the world not only for the chosen people but for all peoples, and that Christ crossed from Hades to Paradise, giving us the hope of eternal salvation. At this point as you have been reading this reflection on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, you might be thinking to yourself, well Fr. John this is all very interesting but what about the Feast that we celebrate today. That is a good point, so this Feast was introduced into the Church in the 9th century, and in the 14th century Pope John 22nd inserted this Feast into the general calendar of the Church. This Feast is a teachable moment in the life of the Church. All Feasts and Solemnities that we celebrate in the Church are teachable moments but some might be more instructional in nature than others. The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity by its very nature is a Feast that provides a teachable moment.

This teachable moment in the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, brings me back to the baptism that I recently was blessed to be the celebrate of, for after the sign of the cross is placed on the one who is to be baptized, and the Liturgy of the Word has taken place, followed by the General Intercessions, Litany of the Saints, Prayer of Exorcism, Anointing before Baptism and the Blessing of the Baptismal Water, there is the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith. It is at this point in the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism we hear the Celebrant Say:

Dear parents and godparents: through the Sacrament of Baptism the child you have presented is about to receive from the love of God new life by water and the Holy Spirit. For your part, you must strive to bring him (her) up in the faith, so that this divine life may be preserved from the contagion of sin and may grow in him (her) day by day. If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, then, mindful of your own Baptism, renounce sin and profess faith in Christ Jesus, the faith of the Church, in which children are baptized. (The Order of Baptism of Children, page 44)

Then before the baptism takes place six questions are asked of the parents, godparents, and all the faithful that are present. These six questions are as follows:

Do you renounce Satan? And all his works? And all his empty show? Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death was and buried, rose again from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting? (The Order of Baptism of Children, page 45-46)

We should focus on the three last questions that are asked at the Sacrament of Baptism for these three questions provide an explanation of the Holy Trinity and our Faith. These three questions are asked right before a person is Baptized and received into our Faith. As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, may we all allow the sign of the cross and the questions before Baptism to enable us to have a deeper understanding of our Triune God.