

Homily for Trinity Sunday 2010

How we name God -- How God names us

(Scriptures for today's liturgy)

I read recently that any preacher who talks about the Trinity for more than two minutes will begin to preach heresy. That's not because most preachers tend toward the heretical, it's because it's just so difficult to speak about the Trinity.

Misunderstandings and disagreements about the Trinity gave way to many heresies in the first centuries of the church as believers tried to come to understand and speak about our God revealed to us as Father, Son and Spirit - yet only one God.

Like God, many of us have three names, too, but even if we have four, five or six names, each of us is but one person while we believe there are three persons in God.

It's when you begin to try to explain this mystery that it's easy to get into theological trouble.

So let me propose this Trinity Sunday that we look not at how we name God but at how God names us.

How does God name you and me?

Well, the first name God gives each of us is child: son or daughter. As our Father, God knows and loves individually and uniquely from before all time.

Every one of us has always been and always will be in God's mind and heart.

And the Father of us all cares for each of us as a good father would: gently with a strong arm, wisely with compassion, justly with mercy, and with love without fail and without end.

The second name of divine origin given each of us is sister or brother.

If we are all children of the same Father, then we are brothers and sisters of Christ, the Father's first Son.

We are, without exception, siblings of the Lord of Lord, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace.

God's Word made flesh, Jesus, the Son of God, chooses to call us his brothers and sisters.

No greater "big brother" could any of us hope to have than one who would lay down his life that his brothers and sisters might have life forever.

And the third name God gives us is the most intimate:
in the gift of the Holy Spirit God names us, beloved.
With a lover's heart the Spirit desires to dwell within us.
Like a soothing balm, the Spirit seeks to protect and heal us,
touching us where the pain is greatest, the wounds the deepest,
the hurt most hurtful, as a lover would do for the beloved.
The Holy Spirit anoints us as the Father's beloved children,
the beloved sisters and brothers of the Son.
From deep within each of us,
the Spirit holds our hearts captive to God's love.

So we are named by our Triune God:
as son, as daughter, children of the Father;
as brother, as sister, siblings of the Son of God;
as beloved, embraced in love of the Spirit of God,
the Spirit who is the love shared by the Father and Son.

Well, I've preached about the Trinity for more than two minutes
and I hope I've been true to what we believe!

Now the Spirit draws us to the table of the Son
to offer praise and thanks to the Father.
Here we will offer gifts, bread and wine
the Father will return to us as his Son's Body and Blood,
drawing us, in the unity of the Spirit into communion
with one another and with our Triune God.

All glory and honor are yours, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
through, with and in Christ, our brother and our Lord.

- Rev. Austin H. Fleming