

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, June 6-7, 2020, Cycle A

There is a classic story told about St. Augustine, who one day was strolling along the seashore, struggling to comprehend the mystery of the Trinity. He encountered a youngster with a little pail. The boy was trotting back and forth, emptying bucket after bucket of water into a hole in the sand, a short distance from the shoreline. When Augustine asked him what he was doing, the lad replied that he was putting the ocean into the hole. When Augustine told him that was impossible, the boy responded that it was just as impossible for him to comprehend the mystery of the Trinity. He said he could sooner pour the whole ocean into the small hole before Augustine could understand the Trinity. St. Augustine himself concluded if we think we have totally understood God, then what we have understood is not God. For while we human beings may acquire insights into certain characteristics of God, our small minds will never be able to fully grasp the mystery that is God. We really can only speak of God by way of analogy, symbol or image. In short, we cannot know God in God's own self, but we can only know God in relationship to what we have experienced of God as God reaches out to us. The Bible, for example, is basically a story of how we experience God reaching out and being with us.

When Moses on Mt. Sinai was struggling with how to name God to his fellow Israelites, God responds with a name that means I am the one always with you: Yahweh – meaning “I will be with you as I am.” “Yahweh” gives us a glimpse of God always present, but leaves shrouded in mystery the being of God. The experience Moses and the ancient Israelites had of God in their forty years in the desert assures us that God is always with us, that God is a God of love who strives to lead us to fuller life. For Christians, this experience of Yahweh, God with us, comes to its fullest expression in the unfathomable divine love enfleshed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We call Jesus “Emmanuel,” a name pulled directly out of the Old Testament meaning “God is with us.” The Gospel passage from John for this Trinity Sunday celebrates the mystery of God's love being enfleshed: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” God's ecstatic love for the world – His wanting to be with us – overflows in the gift of His Son! God is more with us than ever before, because God has now become human with us in Jesus of Nazareth.

The Israelites had a word for God's overflowing love – His tremendous desire to be with us – the Hebrew word “Hesed.” A single English word cannot adequately translate what the Ancient Israelites meant by God's “Hesed.” We generally translate Hesed as “loving kindness” or “covenant love,” but “Hesed” means so much more. The Book of Exodus this weekend proclaims God's Hesed this way: the Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.

Paul the Apostle assures us that we do participate in and experience this “Hesed” love of God when we put the common good of others above our personal preferences and desires. He tells the Corinthians: **“Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.”**

continued

Out of love for others, for the sake of the common good, is why we observe a safe-capacity plan when we come together for worship, why we maintain safe social distancing, why we wear masks when near each other or in a group, and frequently sanitize and wash our hands. Love of others and for the common good is why we have been sheltering in place since March. I know all these strictures are a real wear and tear on us, but the love of the Trinity that Jesus reveals is a love that is poured out for the sake of others, so that others might live. I would think we would not want inadvertently to be the cause of death for anyone.

The love between the persons of the Trinity is a mystery we will never totally comprehend. One thing we know by faith, is that, because God pours himself out for the common good of all, God is always with us and that his love for us is everlasting. So much is God with us that the Divine has become human, that we might share in God's divinity. No greater love has anyone than God has for us!