

**TRINITY SUNDAY, Year C**  
Prov 8:22-31; Ps 8:4-9; Rom 5:1-5; Jn 16:12-15

***THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH***

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun  
Saturday, May 29, 2010, 5:00 p.m. Mass  
Sunday, May 30, 2010, 11:00 a.m. Mass

Concept: Pilch, J. J., "Trinity," *The Cultural World of Jesus C*, 91-93.

This weekend/Sunday is the Solemnity of the **Most Holy Trinity**.

The Trinity is a **central mystery** of our faith.

It is **so important**, in fact, that **every year**

**one Sunday** is set aside to **reflect** and **meditate** on its meaning.

The **Trinity** has a very **prominent** place in the **Mass prayers**.

We **begin** Mass with the **Sign of the Cross**:

*"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*

We begin: Father, Son, and Spirit – the **three persons** of the **Trinity**.

We begin this way for a very important reason.

Our **congregation** is **united as one** because of our **common Baptism**.

When we were baptized, the priest or deacon said:

*"I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*

**Again**: Father, Son, and Spirit – the **three persons** of the **Trinity**.

Our **Baptism** is a sign of our **common belief** in the **Triune God**.

Next, immediately after the Sign of the Cross, the priest gives the **greeting**.

Listen for the Trinity in the greeting.

*"May the grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST,*

*the love of GOD,*

*and the fellowship of the HOLY SPIRIT be with you."*

Jesus Christ, God, Holy Spirit – the **three persons** of the **Holy Trinity**.

The **Mass ends** with the **Final Blessing**,

and the Final Blessing **invokes** the **Trinity again**.

*"May almighty God bless you, the FATHER, and the SON, and the HOLY SPIRIT."*

**Trinity to begin.**

Trinity to **end**.

**Bookends** or **brackets**.

The **multiple references** indicate that the **Trinity** is a **core belief**.

If the **Trinity** is a core belief, **what do we believe about the Trinity?**

In the gospel we just heard, Jesus said,  
“*When he [the Holy Spirit] comes,  
the Spirit of Truth,  
he will guide you to all truth*” (Jn 16:13).

The **Holy Spirit** is **truth**.

The other two persons of the Trinity share this trait with the Holy Spirit:

**God** the **Father**/Creator is **truth** (Is 65:16; Jn 17:17);  
and **Jesus** is **truth**,  
the way, the **truth** and the life (Jn 14:6),  
and he came to **testify to the truth** (Jn 18:37).

Jesus emphasized truth because there was **so much lying and deception**.

Many times when Jesus was going to say something, he would begin,  
“**Amen, amen, I say to you.**”

This meant: “I’m telling you truthfully,” “I’m telling you honestly,”  
“You can trust me” (Pilch, J.J., “Trinity,” *The Cultural World of Jesus C*, 91).

The reason that **Jesus** was so **emphatic** that he was **truthful**  
was because people lied all the time.

Ancient Mid East **society** was **shame-based**.

It was imperative to **uphold** one’s **honor**.

You would **avoid shame** at all costs, even if it meant lying.

In their way of thinking, **honor** was **worth far more than wealth**.

“Without honor, one might as well be dead” (Pilch, 91).

Let’s take **St. Peter** for example.

It is Holy Thursday night.

It is the Last Supper.

St. Peter stated emphatically to Jesus:

“Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you” (Mt 26:35).

After Jesus was arrested, all of the disciples fled except Peter.

Peter followed Jesus at a distance to Caiaphas’ palace.

He was trying to make good on his promise. He was being brave. He took a great risk.

In the courtyard a maid came up to Peter and said,

“You too were with Jesus the Nazorean” (Mt 26:69).

Peter replied, “I do not know the man” (Mt 26:72).

It was a flat out lie.

It was not the truth.

Why?

He wanted to avoid being shamed.

He wanted to preserve his honor.

In ancient Mid-East society, honor was so important  
that people lied all the time to protect their honor and avoid shame.

I'll admit to something that I did when I was in **seventh grade**.  
There were a bunch of us guys: Gary, Rick, Ray, Bill, and me  
We were in Spanish class.  
We didn't like Spanish class.  
Our teacher was a nun from Central America who spoke broken English.  
We were bad.  
We had rubber bands in class.  
We used the rubber bands like sling shots.  
We folded up little pieces of paper, and shot them like missiles.  
The nun had a long veil, and when she turned and wrote on the board,  
we'd shoot little pieces of paper at her,  
and the paper wads hit her veil, and they'd make a little popping sound.  
She'd wheel around, and she'd be so mad, and she would demand: "Who did that?"  
And each us, one by one, we would declare, "Not me!"  
The sister was so exasperated that she went to get the principal, Sister Maureen McCarthy.  
The principal came into the classroom and demanded:  
"Which of you boys did this?"  
Every one of us denied any involvement.  
So she marched us out of the classroom and down to the auditorium,  
and she lined us up along the edge of the stage.  
I was the first in line.  
Sister said, "Michael, empty your pockets."  
I went into my right pocket and pulled out a rosary.  
Looking at my friends, she said, "He's such a good boy."  
Then, she looked back, "Empty the other one."  
It was all rubber bands and pieces of paper.

### **Why did I lie?**

I lied to **protect** my **honor** and to **avoid shame**.

The **American** way of thinking is a little different than Mid East.  
I was only **worried about** protecting **me**.  
I really wasn't thinking about my mom, my dad, my brother, or my sisters.  
In the **Mid East**, it is not about the **shame** it brings to the individual;  
it is also about the shame it brings to **the family**.

In the Mid East, **honor** is **worth more than money** (Pilch, 91).  
People would do **anything to protect** their **honor**, even if it meant lying.  
Because everyone does evil things, everyone lied.  
**Lying** was **pervasive**.

**Jesus** wanted to **preserve, promote, and uphold the truth**.

Jesus is truth.  
He came to testify to the truth.  
The **Holy Spirit** is the Spirit of **Truth**.  
The **Father** is **truth**.

Our **American culture** is different from the Mid East,  
but people try to **protect** their **honor** and **avoid shame**,  
and **people regularly lie** in order to do so.

In the White House, **President Richard Nixon** lied about **Watergate**.  
He protected his honor and avoided shame with a lie.

**President Bill Clinton**.

“Were you with **Monica Lewinsky**?”

“No I was not.”

President Clinton lied to **protect** his **honor**, his reputation;  
he tried **avoid shame** and **embarrassment**.

It happens in **sports**.

Pete Rose. Did you gamble?

Mark McGuire. Do you use steroids?

Clem Haskins. Did your basketball players write their own papers?

Lie after lie after lie to protect honor and avoid shame.

It happens in **finance**.

Mr. Bernie Madoff. Mr. Tom Petters.

“You, my clients, can trust your money with me.”

It has happened in **the Church**.

The Church has tried to protect honor and avoid shame by covering up incidents of past abuse.

There is lying in government, sports, finance, and even the Church.

But we dare not be pointing our fingers at other people.

**Lying happens everywhere**, even in our **own homes**, in our **own families**.

A mother or father asks their child:

“Is your room clean?” The child says, “Yes,” but it’s not.

“Is your homework done?” The child says, “Yes,” but it’s not.

Even for **small children**, it is so important to **protect honor** and **avoid shame**.

The examples are endless.

“Who were you out with last night?”

“What did you do last night?”

“What did you buy?”

“How much money did you spend?”

**We lie** and lie and lie:

to **escape responsibility**, to **avoid trouble**,

to **protect our honor**, to **avoid shame**.

**Jesus knew that lying was pervasive.**  
Everyone does it,  
some more, some less, but we all do.

One of the fundamental traits our **Triune God is truth:**  
the Father is truth  
the Son is truth;  
the Spirit is truth.

If we claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ, **we must people of truth.**  
The **more truthful** we are, the **more** we are like **God.**  
The **less truthful** we are, the **more** we lie, the more we are like **Satan.**

When we **tell the truth**, we **glorify God**,  
and when we glorify God, **God will glorify us.**