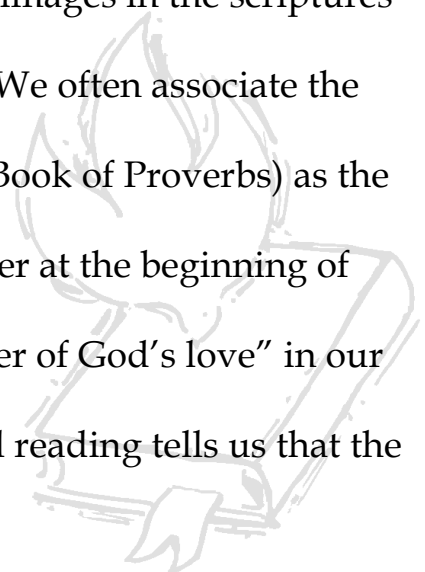


Homily
Trinity Sunday - C
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
June 15-16, 2019

Prv 8: 22-31
Ps 8: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9
Rom 5: 1-5
Jn 16: 12-15

Every year that we pass through this celebration of the Holy Trinity, we homilists make our best attempt to illustrate an image that infinitely surpasses the human mind. We are limited people – we are people of image and metaphor. As a society, we have a hard-enough time entering into the mind of our neighbor or our spouse in our attempt to understand who they are and what they are thinking. To enter into the mind of God, *in se*, outside of human experience, is beyond impossible for us, although St. Thomas and scores of others have written volumes of books that do just that.

In the world of the human senses, we utilize images in the scriptures that try to make sense of this life of the Trinity. We often associate the image of “wisdom” (as illustrated today in the Book of Proverbs) as the person of Christ who was present with the Father at the beginning of creation. St. Paul calls the Holy Spirit the “pourer of God’s love” in our second reading from Romans today. Our gospel reading tells us that the



Holy Spirit is still among us, a Spirit which unifies the Son to His Father and us to God.

Because we read about the images of God, we often utilize the sense of images about which we read and see to comprehend God through our limited human understanding. We read about God's word and breadth symbolizing the Son and the Spirit, respectively, utilizing the senses of touch and hearing.

Today, though, I wish to refer to the little utilized sense in regard to this discussion, which may be a stretch to some, but to my way of reflecting, makes all the difference in the world...

The image of the Trinity is best reflected by me in the smell of tomato sauce.

As many of you know, my mother was born in the state of Calabria in the country of Italy some seventy plus years ago. When my mother's family immigrated to the United States in the late 1950s, they brought with them all the Italian cultures and foods that defined who they were and the things in which they believed. In the world of food, I consider my Aunt Concetta the matriarch of the pasta sauce in the Cosenza clan. (I also give thanks to my Aunt Concetta, who introduced one of her co-

workers to my father around 1992 or so, a woman whom my father eventually married). My Aunt Concetta (or “Connie” as referred to by her co-workers), served as a sous chef at the Candlelight Dinner Playhouse in Summit, IL during its peak years of Dinner Theater extravagance in Chicago. Unlike the role of the kitchen’s head chef, the sous chef is responsible for assisting their supervisor in all matters culinary, as well as preparing the side dishes, sauces and various other food items that are part of the standard menu.

In the case of my Aunt Concetta, the manner in which she cooked tomato sauce could fill a room with smells that distinctively gave an Italian presence to all who entered it. The basic recipe of the sauce varied, depending on the disposition of my aunt and the foods that were available to her in the kitchen.

In this light, my aunt once taught me that the secret to a good tomato sauce was the manner in which you thickened it at the end of its cooking cycle. For those who wished to take the easy way out, my aunt taught me that a can or two of tomato paste usually thickened a sauce rather quickly, but gave the serious cook a victorious satisfaction of a sports’

athlete winning a competition through cheating. If my aunt wanted to thicken a sauce immediately, she would throw handfuls of Parmesan-Reggiano cheese into the sauce pot, cheese that immediate would thicken even the loosest of sauces and make it the richest, gooiest pasta topping one could experience.

The most intense way to thicken a sauce that my aunt taught me is to turn the fire to its lowest setting and allow the sauce to cook down gradually, intensifying the flavors within the sauce itself. My aunt often would enrich the sauce by throwing in beef marrow bones so that the sauce would absorb that intense flavor. And then, if she wished to live decadently, my Aunt Concetta *still* would throw in the handfuls of cheese and then double the intensity of the flavor.

Anyone who walked into the kitchen of my Aunt Concetta immediately would be consumed by the smells of that kind of love and if you liked pasta sauce, you would immediately search for a piece of bread to dip into that sauce and experience first-hand the taste from the smells you encountered.

To describe the smell or taste of the sauce would do injustice to the experience and yet I have just tried to illustrate through the sense of smell what this sauce might smell like. The smell is as distinctive in a food sense as incense would be in a spiritual way – if you are predisposed to embracing the smell, then when you enter into it, your life becomes changed and enveloped into the life that the smell represents.

In respect to this particular homily, *this* is how I would like to convey the presence of the Holy Spirit and the bond of Trinity for you today. As much as we need a visual image to comprehend the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (such as three interlocking rings or three triangles connected together), I wish you to imagine a smell like a really good dinner that everyone enjoys around a dinner table that heightens a meal and draws the participants closer together in a way not originally possible. When you walk into *this type* of Italian household, you enter into a world that unites the diners with an experience they cannot express or ever forget. The sauce becomes the common denominator that unifies those who sit at table, for the experience they are about to

share is very much directed by the smells they savor. And once you gather around a table with good food and good smells, the rest of the meal overflows with good conversation, good friends, and a good feeling that lingers well in one's palate.

Take that experience and compare it to the bond that unifies two friends or a husband and wife, or in the case of the Trinity, the Father and the Son. You often cannot define love but you very much sense what the love is because it is yours and it is special. The Church provides a visible sign to this experience of love within marriage in the form of wedding rings. Clubs and organizations have insignias that define the charism to which a person belongs.

If you take that intensity, that experience, and amplify it infinitely, you might have a miniscule understanding of the sense and the love that bonds the Father and the Son, a love which we call the Holy Spirit. If this experience needs to be sensed via the rings or the insignias or even tomato sauce and if you can get some "sense" (so to speak) of the intense relationship of the Father and the Son, then you can understand why the concept of the Trinity introduced by the English faithful in the

twelfth century and was made a universal solemnity by Pope John XXII some two hundred years later.

Let us allow the symbols of life that draw us into the world of cooking or other endeavors also remind us of the life of God that is united by love, a concept that can be defined most adequately through experience. May we allow that experience of love unite us to God as well and unite us to the people that we meet. This is our prayer.