

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The saints of the Old Testament knew it. Moses knew it. The One True God is Three Persons in One God. The first verse of the Bible proclaims it: “In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.” As you have heard from this pulpit before, the Word God in the language in which Moses wrote is plural. More than one – not more than one God, but three Persons in One God.

So too as Israel was called to worship was the God-given cry “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One” – again the Word “God” is plural, and yet “the Lord is One”. Three Persons in One God, one God in Three Persons. So we began our worship this day, as did Israel in the Tabernacle, and as did Israel in the Temple: in the Name of the Triune God - “Blessed be the Holy Trinity, and the undivided Unity: we will praise and glorify Him, because He has shown His mercy upon us.”

He has shown His great mercy upon you. For the Trinitarian vision given the Prophet Isaiah is recorded that you see through the eyes of the Prophet the heavenly throne room, the mysterious six-winged seraphim crying “Holy, holy holy is the Lord of Sabaoth!” The Thrice Holy God is Lord, One Lord. And although the seraphim are in heaven, still their proclamation is “the whole earth is full of His glory.” God filling heaven, God filling earth, God beyond the comprehension of men, God in Three Persons, the God we worship and proclaim this day.

Of the incomprehensible Nature of God, the Apostle writes, giving voice to the marvelous Mystery of the Holy Trinity, and the limits of the fallen flesh: “O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

So this day you sing with seraphim and proclaim what no man can understand. That’s what faith does. Faith confesses Divine Truths that surpass our understanding. Faith places heavenly realities upon earthly lips, realities upon which faith, not seeing, yet believes.

If it seems a bit overwhelming to you, if the Majesty of the Almighty is more than you can conceive, you are not unlike that man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews. One would think that a man such as he, a man studied in the Scriptures, a teacher of doctrine to the chosen people of God, would understand better than most. So it is that the Lord’s rebuke of Nicodemus is stern: “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?” To Nicodemus too was the Truth of the Nature and Work of God incomprehensible.

The Words of our Lord to Nicodemus that St. John records are Trinitarian Words, the clear teaching of God the Son regarding God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. It is the Son who has come down from heaven, the heaven in which the Father reigns, and the Spirit that brings the right knowledge of the same God to men, through the watery rebirth He alone can give, rebirth from above in the Triune Name.

It is the Son who has ascended into heaven. He alone can give voice to the Holy Trinity. Hear then His proclamation, as He refers to Himself as one of the Three Persons of the One God: “We speak of what We know, and We testify of what We have seen.” The voice of the Father and the Spirit is the voice of the Incarnate Son. The Work of the Spirit, the Spirit sent by the Father in the Son’s Name, is to remind men of all the things the Son has said.

He is King of King and Lord of Lords, He is the Lord of Sabaoth who is the center of the angelic hymn, who with the Father and the Spirit is the One Thrice Holy God. And it is because of His redeeming work that the angel could touch the lips of the Prophet and take away his iniquity, for that forgiveness is Christ's forgiveness, purging Isaiah's sin. That power, the power to remit sins, is not an angelic power. It comes from the precious suffering and death of God the Son.

That the angel could do so seven centuries before the birth of God the Son by the Virgin is a lesser mystery than that of the Holy Trinity. For Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the Master Craftsman at the Father's Right through Whom all things were made, and His delight since the foundation of the world has been with the sons of men, which is to say that His delight has been with you.

And that is where the Holy Trinity meets you. For you, like the Prophet, have been a man of unclean lips dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips. That which is born of flesh is flesh. As the Lord declared, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" As a fallen, earthly man, you cannot receive heavenly things.

Isaiah, knowing the just punishment of a sinner by God, cried out "Woe is me, for I am undone!" And that should be your cry as well, for if Isaiah was a sinner, if Isaiah felt convicted by his shortcomings and his transgressions, how should you feel as you are clearly seen by a holy and just God?

But you are not undone. God is a God of love. He does not destroy you. He saves you. He saves you by taking on Flesh, living out a perfect, sinless life as a Man, and then dying the death your sins have deserved. And the benefits of His salvific work are made yours in the rebirth the Lord taught to Nicodemus – in Holy Baptism you are born from above by water and the Spirit, born from above as the Triune Name is placed as a seal upon you. That which is born of Spirit is spirit. So the Spirit fills you, and the image of God is restored in you by God in you.

In Him was the Father well pleased. Upon Him did the Spirit descend and remain. By Him you are saved. You are brought from death to life. You are brought from sin to holiness, from transgression to purity. But it is not an angel bearing a coal that touches your lips and cleanses you. It is the Pastor bearing the Body and Blood of Christ, which touch your lips, and fill you. And while your eyes see Bread and Wine, you eat and drink the Celestial King Isaiah saw. And like the Prophet, "this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged."

Not an angel, but the Lord of the Angels died to win the forgiveness you receive. God died. He died to give you life. So you, redeemed of Christ, you who receive His Gifts, you who are filled with His Spirit, you who are reconciled through Him to God the Father, may proclaim with the Apostle: "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" And with the Church of the ages you may proclaim "Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity, we will praise Him and glorify Him, because He has shown His mercy upon us."

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