

The Most Holy Trinity
June 4, 2023
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

“St. Leo has said, that the nature of God is, by its essence, goodness itself. Now, goodness naturally diffuses itself. And by experience we know that men of a good heart are full of love for all, and desire to share with all the goods which they enjoy. And therefore he (God) ardently desires to make us partakers of his own happiness.”

(Sermons of St. Alphonsus Liguori, Sermon for Trinity Sunday)

In his sermon for Trinity Sunday, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, building upon a thought from Pope Saint Leo the Great, wanted to remind his listeners of the love the Trinity has offered to humanity. An important aspect of his sermon focused on faith, especially as it pertains to our understanding of His Church. When, at His Ascension, Jesus commanded His followers to go out into the world preaching, teaching and baptizing in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, He wanted them to, not only invite Jew and Gentile alike into His Divine Family, but He wanted these first presbyters, in the establishment of the His Church, to remind all persons of the deep and abiding love of the Most Holy Trinity. It is a love experienced through the sacraments which enriches all those who are a part of this family. Saint Alphonsus would conclude by instructing those present how they, and we, can see this love through each of the persons of the Trinity: the love of the Father in creation, the love of the Son in redemption, the love of the Spirit in our sanctification. Today, we will retrace these three proofs of Saint Alphonsus concerning the love the Trinity has for us. It is our hope that these words, uttered during his lifetime (1696-1787) will still resonate in our minds and hearts in our day.

We begin by reflecting upon the love the Father has for us witnessed in creation. More to the point, in our creation. We believe that God the Father has created the universe as a gift to humanity from His love. From the largest of the celestial bodies to the smallest of subatomic particles, all things are a gift of love from the Father. Although this is expressed in general terms, a person of faith knows that the love of the Father applies to their own creation as well. Whereas our Sacred Scriptures begin with the creation of all things put forth in the Book of Genesis, we believe and profess that even before there was the first act of creation, God the Father knew and loved us. Consider it this way, God is eternal, and because He is eternal, we can say that He always knew you and loved you. There has never been an instance in the mind of God where you were Not; not existing, not loved, not thought about. In God's mind, you have always been and He has always loved you. He expresses this eternal love for you by creating everything for your enjoyment, your pleasure. That is why, in the Book of Genesis, the author recounts God surveying His creation and pronouncing it to be Good. Despite our best attempts to diminish this loving revelation of the Father, through the way we have abused both the natural world and our own persons, everything and everyone coming from the mind is a Good gift from the Father to each one of us. One last example on this point, because God the Father thought of and loved you, He created Saint Alphonsus, who because he was thought of and loved by the Father, was able to express God's love found in His creation in such a way as to still be beneficial in our time serving as a reminder of how much the Father has first loved us. Everything/everyone before us and everything/everyone after us is a witness of God the Father's love for us.

Harkening back to the Book of Genesis, we can read of mankind's original disobedience. Man, in the persons of Adam and Eve, turn their minds and hearts away from God by one act. This move is seen as a turn inwardly. Now, due to this ungrateful insult, they, and we, selfishly misuse the gifts of creation offered from the loving hand of the Father. Ignorance of all that God has done for us, because of His love for each of us, plagues our minds and is displayed through our actions directed back toward Him, our neighbor and ourselves. To free us from this infernal predicament, a sacrifice of perfect love must be offered to the Father. Only God can perfectly say to God: "I am sorry." No person is capable of doing this and no amount of imperfect sacrifices can make the same atonement as the one perfect one can do. God the Son, who with the Father has always known and loved you, chose to come and be that perfect sacrifice to make amends. Yet not sufficient to just be a perfect sacrifice, the Son also chooses to spend thirty-three years living in that same flesh which spurned His Father's love. It is during His time living amongst us, that He offers a cure to the ignorance we possess resulting from our attachment to sin. We can now know God and through this knowledge offer ourselves as living witnesses to others of God's love for us. This entire action of sacrifice of the Son for love of you can be summed up in two words uttered as He died upon the cross: "I Thirst."

Not content with suffering and dying for the forgiveness of our sins, the Son ascends into Heaven to intercede for us through His Wounds and He sends to each one of us the love He and the Father share between themselves. It is a love which is a person, the Holy Spirit of love which will dwell in the souls of His children. The purpose of the Holy Spirit will be to accompany us through this life by the power of His guidance and remembrance of the things the Son did for us, which made amends for the continued way we lob ungrateful insults to the Father by our sinful actions. Through the inspiration of the Spirit, the followers of the Son would seek to establish a church. A church which will offer the perpetual sacrifice of the Son to the Father as a continued sin offering; while, at the same time, offering to mankind the continued loving graces from both the Father, Son and Spirit to assist mankind in their journey back to their home with Him in Heaven.

My dear family, although I probably have butchered the beautiful thought of Saint Alphonsus Liguori and made this presentation more confusing than intended, I would offer one final example which might clear up any confusion I might have caused. The whole of our existence can be seen as an eternal wheel. All things flow out of the mind of God. They are intended for our benefit and blessing. Despite the way we have misused them, the Son, by His Paschal Sacrifice, has made all things good again. The Spirit, through the Church, reminds us to receive these gifts as they were initially given and then return them back to the Father as a means of our loving Him. A constant wheel of I receive, I appreciate, I return. Why? Because I am loved.