

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

The familiar words of our Gospel, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,*” we will hear again today. As Marianne is confirmed, we’ll begin that rite with these same words. They highlight the importance not just of the words, but of the faith into which Marianne and we have been baptized, and the faith that we confess: “that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.” The faith we confess is that the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are all distinct and equally “God and Lord,” and “yet there are not three Gods” or “three Lords” “but one God” and “one Lord.”

Indeed, this doctrine and faith are vital to the Christian church — it is “the catholic faith” as we just confessed. And unless we “keep it whole and undefiled [we] will without doubt perish eternally.” So important is this teaching, that the church made sure that as we come together to worship, we are immersed in Trinitarian language. You should rejoice that you go to a church where the historic liturgy is used and you are not left to the whims of the pastor, for again, typically in liturgical churches following a historic liturgy, the Holy Trinity is called upon, acknowledged, prayed and sung to. Not so much in the churches where worship is understood as entertainment, and where the pastor constructs worship more according to the spirit of the times rather than the Holy Spirit.

Consider briefly the Divine Service here. It begins by calling on the name of the Triune God, then confessing sins and being absolved by the same Holy Trinity. And you hear Jesus’ departing words in both; whether calling upon His name or forgiving sins, it is “in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

But we confess and invoke the name of the Holy Trinity all over the Divine Service. Consider the Introit, usually from the Psalms, which conclude with “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,” and so forth. Consider the threefold Kyrie: “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.” Consider the Gloria: we sing the praises to “God, the Father Almighty,” to “the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,” to Him who “with the Holy Ghost art most high in the glory of God the Father.” Consider the Collect, typically prayed to the Father “through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever,” although this Trinity Sunday it was prayed to the Holy Trinity, and concluded, “for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever.” Consider the Creed. Today it was the Athanasian Creed, but they are all Trinitarian. Consider our hymns, consider the *Sanctus* canticle, or the *Nunc Dimittis* canticle, consider the

Benediction—Trinitarian all, and this Trinitarian emphasis is week in and week out in our church—important, for confessing the Trinity is part and parcel of being Christian, for God is Trinity from the first pages of the Scripture to the end.

Do you remember, a couple weeks ago? We heard St. Paul preach to the Athenians about the God that they did not know, for they had erected an altar to “*the unknown God*” (Acts 17). Paul told them about the “*Lord of heaven and earth,*” about the God who gave “*to all mankind life and breath and everything,*” who “*made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.*” This God is the God Moses tells us about in our Old Testament reading, the God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, who spoke the creation into being, who, in creating man, said “*let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness.*” The God the Athenians worshiped as unknown is not indeed unknown, for we know Him in the Son. Yet, He remains a mystery, the Holy Trinity. Whether at church or in our daily lives, the Holy Trinity is the God in whom “*we live and move and have our being.*”

Acknowledging that, let us listen to Luther who teaches us to begin and end our day in worship of the Holy Trinity. “In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say: ‘In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.’” Same thing “in the evening when you go to bed” These words remind us that we are Jesus’ disciples because we have been baptized in the Trinitarian name; the cross has been traced on our foreheads and hearts in Holy Baptism reminding us of the death by which we have been redeemed. In this sacrament, we have been made disciples, Jesus’ followers, but more than followers—pupils, learning from Him all that He taught, all that He commanded.

What a lifelong endeavor that is, but a major part of it begins with the catechism, learning the chief parts of Christian teaching. Once you are baptized, you are being led toward that learning. How do “*we live and move and have our being*” as believers in the Holy Trinity? We follow the commandments, which can be summarized succinctly as Jesus taught: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... the great and first commandment. And ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets*” (Matt. 22:37-40). Or again, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “*whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*” (Matt. 7:12).

Being disciples of the Holy Trinity does not mean that one day you will understand the mystery of the Trinity. Unlike the mysteries that one might want to read and solve, the Holy Trinity is not a mystery to be solved. It is a mystery to be confessed, as we do in the creeds, which is why we study the baptismal creed in catechism class, and why we arise in the morning and lie down at night praying the Apostles’ Creed. And as we ponder God’s word throughout our lives, we continue

to learn more about the Holy Trinity and how the Holy Trinity acts in our lives to create and preserve us, to redeem and save us, to convert and sanctify us.

Being a disciple of Jesus and being taught all He commanded means, surely, to pray as He taught us, and the Lord's Prayer is Trinitarian, too. It's a prayer taught by the Son, prayed to the Father, asking, in part, that the Holy Spirit would come upon us so that by His grace we might believe God's holy word and lead godly lives—that's a work of the Spirit. We're taught by Luther to pray this prayer in the morning, and at meal times, and at night—a prayer steeped in the Holy Trinity.

Being a disciple of Jesus means more than just being baptized into the Triune name; it means returning to it daily. It means acknowledging that we are sinners by nature, who need to drown the old Adam in us by daily contrition and repentance along with all sins and evil desires, that daily a new man, forgiven in Christ Jesus, might emerge and live before God in righteousness. And should a sin beset you, being a disciple means seeking out your pastor to confess your sins, that you might hear the absolution — that is, forgiveness of sins for the sake of Jesus' cross and resurrection, gracious words of forgiveness spoken by your pastor by God's command: Trinitarian words of forgiveness in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Being a disciple means partaking of the foretaste of the feast to come, invited to the wedding feast hosted by Father for the sake of His Son. It's a feast where the bride — the church — is arrayed in the spotless garment that comes by the washing of water with the word, along with the faith wrought by the Spirit that trusts this word of God in the water. Yes, Holy Communion is also Trinitarian.

Dear saints, what a wonderful day on which to celebrate a confirmation: on the Festival of the Holy Trinity, binding to us today the strong name of the Trinity by invoking Him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, acknowledging that this name was bound to us by its invocation along with water. And we acknowledge that we have been taught: of the commandments, and creeds, and prayers, and the sacraments. But this is a confirmation, not a graduation, for we all have the task of learning “*to observe all that [Jesus] commanded*” — something that is never done.

God grant, in your ongoing learning, that as you hold onto the mystery of the Holy Trinity, you may believe in the simple thing that every newly baptized child believes: that your salvation is done, that Jesus has done it all for you. And God grant you assurance, because He promised it, that in this faith Jesus will be with you “*always, to the end of the age,*” and will finally take you into the eternal fellowship of the Holy Trinity.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.