

Homily of the **Reverend Michael W. Davis**

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

May 30, 2015

When I was growing up, I was utterly fascinated with airplanes, with model rockets, and with flight.

At one point, I thought I might like to be an astronaut, or even an airline pilot.

Over the years, with all my travels back and forth to Ohio to visit my family, with my many pilgrimage trips to Italy, the Marian Shrines of Europe, the Holy Land, and with my annual retreats to the House of Prayer for Priests in California which I love so much, I have had many opportunities to fly.

As I think about it, I don't know what I have enjoyed more, the destination of my travels, or the flight which got me there! The truth is, I have never gotten used to the amazing experience of flight.

The thrilling ascent. The majestic vista. God's magnificent creation as seen from above. A view which never ceases to give me insights into the mindboggling expanse of the created world, made by the finger of the Almighty.

Seeing things from a vantage point that I otherwise could never have, the experience of flight, and its breath-taking aerial view, have always awakened within me a sense of wonder and awe.

Yet, as journeyers of faith in Christ Jesus, we have ALSO been given a beautiful view from above. But, it's not just a view. It's much more profound than that.

As a result of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ and the sacramental life of the Church, each one of us, among the baptized, has been lifted up, ennobled, given a trajectory that we otherwise could never have had.

The graciousness of God has seen fit to lift us up, giving us a majestic vista of the Creator's intent for us, bathing us with a divine washing, giving us holy potential,

instilling in us the power to rise above sin, and giving us meaning, direction, and purpose.

Breathtakingly, heavenly mercy and eternity are given to us, before which we can only be in wonder and awe.

Indeed, through the powerful waters of our Baptism into Jesus Christ, we have been made new creations, and we are drawn up into **the very inner life of God**.

My own story probably started with that young Associate Pastor at St. Ann's Church in Hamilton, Ohio at my baptismal ceremony more than five decades ago.

Then again, it was probably the faith-filled gesture of my parents and godparents who took me to church that day.

Behind it all, however, was the action of the Lord paving the way for a spiritual story to unfold through many circumstances, experiences, and people.

When I was a newly ordained priest, I remember spending a bit of downtime in Ohio, just previous to beginning my very first priestly assignment.

The priest-principal of the Catholic high school that I had attended as an adolescent, had invited me get together with him, and to play a round of golf. And I gladly accepted.

I was told ahead of time that we would be joined by a retired Cincinnati priest who was eager to tee it up and to play along with us that day.

When I arrived at the first tee, I was introduced to this kindly retired priest. Hello, I'm Richard Heskamp, the elderly gentleman said. The name Heskamp sounded oddly familiar to me. I began wondering where I had heard that name before. As I prepared to tee up the ball and hit my first shot, it dawned on me. I had once read on my Baptismal certificate the name of a Father Heskamp. Could this be the man who baptized me, I wondered?

After I hit my shot down the fairway, a pretty good shot if I recall, I asked the priest, "Father, did you work at St. Ann's in Hamilton back in the early 1960's. He said, "why, yes. I was the Associate Pastor there, back in those days."

I said, "well, I have some good news to report. You were the one who baptized me!"

He had a big grin on his face. He then said, "it must have been a very powerful Baptism."

Here I was, a newly ordained priest, standing in front of the very man who poured that holy water over my forehead and made it possible for my own spiritual story to begin, as a child of God, claimed so by power and action of the Blessed Trinity.

Families, bishops, priests, and deacons do this great work every single day, pass on the faith and the treasures of life in Christ to the next generation.

For all of us who have received Baptism, being baptized "in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit," puts our feet on the road to eternity, with our holy vocations lived out in the interim.

Do you ever think about your baptismal dignity, about being a be-loved part of God's family? Or have the passing of years dulled your appreciation for this great gift; perhaps we have just gotten too used to it.

Beginning as a deacon, and now as a priest for 25 years, I have never gotten used to the privilege of fulfilling the words of Jesus, when he told his Apostles "go out and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "the truth of the Holy Trinity has, indeed, been at the very root of the Church's living faith, principally by means of Baptism."

How privileged I have felt... to have poured that water of rebirth and regeneration over those many many souls whom I have helped (over 25 years) to begin their walk with Christ at their Baptism!

There's cause for great joy here, every time Jesus' words are fulfilled.

All the Sacraments, in fact, help us on our pilgrim way.

They powerfully bring us in touch with Holy Trinity.

They bring us into such close conformity with Jesus Christ, that the fatherhood of God comes to apply to us. As God touches us, feeds us, and strengthens us through the sacraments, we can truly say that God is our Father, a sentiment that

we so often express with devotion in the Lord's Prayer. In the Sacraments, we encounter the fatherhood of God, as he loves his children.

In light of the Sacraments, and what God does for us in these sacred rites, we can say with Saint Paul, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

This is clear in a preeminent way in the mystery of Holy Communion. Through Eucharist, we become living, breathing, moving, walking tabernacles of the presence of Christ. This has all kinds of implications for how we live our lives of faith, making Christ's agenda our own agenda; and how we are to treat one another along the way.

Through his Church, Christ takes on flesh again and puts flesh on the road to eternity. In the Sacraments, we experience the saving presence of Christ, now in us.

In the wake of Pentecost, the promised "advocate," the "Paraclete," the "Consoler," which is the promise of the Father, the constantly abiding presence of God, animates our lives, and "strengthens our bond with the Church, associates us more closely with her mission, and helps us to bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds (CCC#1316). In the Sacraments, we receive the impulse of the Holy Spirit at work within us, and we are sent forth to build a better world, one of justice, love, and peace to the glory of God.

Our journey of faith has everything to do with incorporating us into relationship with the Holy Trinity, being drawn into the inner life of God.

As it says in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. Even now, we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity. "If a man loves me," says the Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home in him." (CCC#260).

Why would we not want that for ourselves and for our children? Isn't that the faith-filled view from above that will help us on our journey to eternity?

If we live for him now, we will live with him later. To quote Saint Paul in his letter to the Romans, "if the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead (that is the

Father) dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

As the late Pope Paul VI articulated in the Credo of the People of God, “we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death, in eternal light.”

Surely that suggests the challenge of the journey, but it also suggests that a glorious future awaits.

Instead of living for the now, however, we, people of faith, are to live with that eternity in mind.

Instead of fussing and wasting time on the pursuits of power, pleasure, popularity, prestige, and possessions, we, people of faith, are to find our daily and eternal peace in God.

Instead of being self-absorbed, we, people of faith, find our fulfillment in being open, service-oriented, generous, and grateful to the God of Heaven and earth.

Can the wonder and awe of it all energize us to strive again to capture a transcendent view of life?

Can we allow God’s grace to take hold of us?

Can we allow ourselves to be emboldened and lifted up by that majestic vista, a daily vision which helps us to more and more be drawn into the inner life of God?

In my life as a priest, I have been intimately involved in the mystery of bringing others to an encounter with the Trinity through the sacramental life of the Church.

Of those aspects of priesthood, I never tire.

I have never gotten used to the awesome responsibility of asking the Father to send His Spirit to change humble gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. So often at that moment, my hands shake. Bringing the real and substantial presence of Christ to nourish and feed his people. Through such a mystery, we are drawn into inner life of the Trinity.

I have never gotten used to the awesome responsibility of absolving people in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Saying that sin and selfishness do not have the final

word. God's mercy does, fulfills the directions of Jesus, and puts me in awe. Forgiveness in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, through such a mystery we are drawn into the inner life of the Trinity.

Profound, indeed, it has been when I have been called upon to anoint the sick and dying. Absolving and commending a soul, in their final breaths, to its Maker, launching a person into the arms of a God who is Father, Son, and Spirit. I have cried almost every time I have said the prayer of commendation, even when I haven't known the person, when they are alone, or when they are comatose with no else to pray for them. The Church and its priests are there. Through such a mystery, we are drawn into the inner life of the Trinity.

In his papal bull announcing the extraordinary jubilee year of mercy, Pope Francis spoke of mercy, as a word which reveals the very mystery of the Trinity. Mercy as the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy, the bridge that connects God and man.

As we are gathered on this Solemnity of the Most Blessed Trinity, we are not just here to here to capture a beautiful view of God's good creation, as one might see on a flight. We are gathered by the action of the Father, Son, and Spirit, who lifts us up with mercy and love, drawing us more profoundly into His inner life.

And that should fill us with wonder and awe!