

## The Holy Trinity

Matthew 28: 16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Have you ever played the board game Life? You get a car, spin the dial, and move spaces around the board. You get married, have kids, buy a house, and get regular paydays. The winner is the one with the most money at the end, and you retire to millionaire acres. But one of the first decisions you have to make in that game is whether to go into debt by going to college or just to head out into the world and get started right away. If you go to college, you typically have much better paydays and more opportunities to make money throughout the game. If you don't go, you save a bunch of money at the beginning and get a head start on the rest of the players.

How you start the game of Life makes a huge difference in how the game goes. That's true in real life as well. How you start makes a huge difference in what happens to your life.

That was certainly true for Jesus' life. How he began as a human being made a huge difference in what happened in his life. He didn't begin on his own, but with the unity and activity of the whole Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Son right from conception. He is conceived by the Holy Spirit. And the Father sends his Son to us.

That same triune God that was working together at his incarnation continues to do so throughout his life. Jesus begins his public ministry at his Baptism. What happens? The Holy Spirit comes down as a dove. The Father declares that Jesus is his beloved Son and that he is well pleased with Jesus. Jesus began his mission of salvation together with the Father and Holy Spirit, and all are active in completing our salvation. We see him regularly in prayer with his Father, and the Spirit is with him every step of the way.

Then come the final days of his life. On the cross Jesus is alone. Even his Father has abandoned him as he goes through hell for us. But you can see the Father even in that loneliness and suffering—Jesus is carrying out his Father's will by going to the cross. On Easter morning, the Father raises him from the dead. Later, when Jesus ascends into heaven, he sends his Holy Spirit into the Church.

Now, as I've just reviewed how Jesus began, continued, and ended his earthly life in the unity of all persons of the Trinity, I'm struck by how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all working together on our behalf. Read through the Bible, and you don't find a hint of jealousy, resentment, anger, bitterness, or strife in the Trinity. The three persons are wonderfully and mysteriously one God.

The Church has used some Celtic patterns symbols of what we believe. One of them is the familiar knot that symbolizes the Trinity—three circles endlessly woven together in perfect unity. Sometimes a circle is made through the knots to emphasize how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God.

How Jesus began his earthly life made a huge difference in what happened in his life. From beginning to end, the Trinity was wonderfully united in action for us.

The same is true for our lives. How we start makes a huge difference. And for us in the Church, the triune God is our starting place. We begin by being baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. What difference does that make?

First, beginning with Baptism makes a huge difference in how we see the world we live in. The earth, stars, animals, plants, and universe are not just nature or an endless product of evolution, but all are fearfully and wonderfully made by God. Each day we believe that God the Father is Creator of heaven and earth.

We also believe God still cares for his creation. He doesn't watch from a distance but keeps it and protects it. Yes, we see wars and natural disasters, pollution, hatred and violence that make us doubt. But when you begin by being baptized into God the Father, you believe that a tree bearing fruit is a gift from God so we have something to eat. You believe that a firefighter is given by God to help keep danger at bay. You believe that the medicine you buy from a pharmacy is given by God through the

wonderful minds who do research and study this incredible creation.

Food and drink, house and home, work and country, rest and school are gifts from God for us to live our lives in his gracious care.

Second, beginning in the Trinity at Baptism makes a huge difference in our relationship with God. It's all grace. It's all a gift. How do we begin a worship service? With confession. We admit we are poor, miserable sinners. We confess we deserve only temporal and eternal punishment. We know we have sinned against God and each other by thought, word, and deed.

But Jesus came long ago as Savior. He came not to be ooh'd and aah'd at, but to cry out in agony on a cross. He came not only to be born in a manger but also to be placed in a tomb. He came with not just a star to guide Wise Men, but also with an early morning rising sun as he rose from the dead. With all Jesus has done, we are forgiven. In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die and rise for us. For his sake, God forgives us all our sin. He has given us the privilege of becoming his children. Our Baptism places us into God's loving and forgiving hands right from the very start of our lives.

No wonder that in Matthew 28, Jesus says we are to go and make disciples of all nations. We are to go and tell others what Jesus has done for us. We are to go and bring others to Jesus so he can give to them what we have received: that loving and forgiven relationship with God.

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord. We go, make disciples, teach, and baptize, all because what Jesus has done for us makes all the difference in our relationship with God. When you begin with Baptism into the name of the triune God, it makes a huge difference in your life.

Third, it makes a huge difference in the kind of people we become. We believe the Holy Spirit has brought us together into the Church to become different people, people who listen to what Jesus says and become his disciples in this troubled world, people who want to do what is right and good and helpful.

When we begin with Baptism, it makes a huge difference in the people we become. The Holy Spirit brings us together to support, encourage, teach, and build each other up. The Holy Spirit gathers us together in the name of the triune God.

How you begin makes a huge difference in what happens in your life. One way to remember the wonderful start you have in the Church is to remember your Baptism. My baptismal certificate is framed, making it visible and easy for me to be reminded of its importance. My father poured water over my head in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). My life truly began on October 12, 1948, the day I was baptized. Ever since, how I see life, my relationship with God, and who I've become is because of that joyous beginning in the name of the Trinity.

Today is Holy Trinity Sunday, and I can think of no better way to celebrate this Church festival than by thanking our triune God for getting us off to a great start. In the waters of Baptism, we began our lives of faith in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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