

Sermon for the Feast of the Holy Trinity

'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.'

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'Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who hast clothed Himself in names.'

So said St. Ephraim the Syrian.

From the beginning, the Lord has wished to give to His people His name. Yet it would seem He has not one name, but an almost unending sum of names. For from beginning of creation, He is known only as God, or, more literally, 'the Powers', for that is what the Hebrew name for God literally means. He is the summation of all the powers of the world. For this reason, the old King James rendered this title often as 'the Almighty,' Him who possesses every might.

Later, He is revealed Himself to Abraham as 'El Shaddai', a strange name, meaning literally 'the God who said "stop"'. This is a veiled reference to God's work of creation in the beginning, where having created *the heavens and the earth*, He separated each thing from its opposite from out of the *face of the deep*, that *darkness, formless and void. Light from darkness. Day from night. Seas from the sky. Waters from the dry ground. Each thing from its kind.* Man from the dust of the earth. All these things He separated, and having drawn them apart, He bid them to stop, that they might stand in a rightly ordered relation from that which they were separated.

To Moses He is first revealed as *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, showing that He is not only all powerful, and the creator of all, but a God who draws near to His beloved people; who calls them by name.

Then from the flame of the burning bush, when Moses asks with what name he shall speak to the Hebrews in Egypt on behalf of God, the Lord gives three names.

There He declares Himself to be *I am that I am*, for He is all, and in Him do all things subsist. *All things have come through him, and without him nothing exists that has existed.*

Then He commands Moses to tell the people of Israel '*I Am has sent me to you.*' Yet note, He is no longer *I Am that I Am*, but merely *I Am*. He is, but what He is is not yet revealed.

Then, to make things stranger still, He tells Moses '*Say this to the people of Israel, the LORD, has sent me to you.*' This term, which in English we render as 'the LORD' in all capital letters, is nearly untranslatable. It is gibberish, it is not a real word. What it is is three Hebrew phrases said over one another at the same time: I was, I am, I will ever be.

And to confuse the reader more, or perhaps intrigue him further, having just given three names by which He can be called upon, He declares '*By this one name I shall be known forevermore.*' Yet this is not so strange, that three names should be one, even as three divine persons are one eternal God. Did you forget? This is the feast of Trinity, where the many find their unity in the one. "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who hast clothed Himself in names."

Dozens, if not hundreds, of other names are given to God throughout the Bible: *the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the God above all gods, The Lord of Angels*. I will not tire you by listing them here. What is important to know is that the Holy Scriptures are an unceasing revelation of the names of God, of *what He Is*, all of which together are but one name of the One True God.

Yet what has this to do with today, the Feast of Holy Trinity? It is an odd feast day, to be sure. Unlike every other feast, it does not celebrate an event in the life of Christ or the Apostles. Rather, it seems to celebrate a doctrine, a teaching, and teachings are not things that lend themselves to celebration. Many in the hard sciences have attempted to popularize Square Root Day, but to little avail, for teachings are not things that lend themselves to celebration.

Where we go wrong is in exactly this: Trinity Sunday does not celebrate a teaching, a mere doctrine. It celebrates the defense and preservation of the true name and nature of God, His Holy, Trinitarian name, the name of the *Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, throughout endless centuries, against endless persecutions, in the face of endless heresies. It is a celebration of the victory of

the Church against all her enemies; the victory of Christ against all falsehood. It is a celebration that the names which God has given, by which we, His fallen people, may call upon Him in time of need, and in time of joy, have not been lost to the vicissitudes of this demonic world, and will never be lost, even if every church be decimated, and every Christian driven into the wilderness; yet the name of the Lord will be called upon in the quietude of one's closet, in the emptiness of the wasteland. Even there, it shall outlast every name.

For the Lord declares *'by this name shall I be known forevermore.'*

It is the eternal victory of the name of the Lord, the name of Christ, over every name and created thing that we celebrate on this Sunday, this Sunday of the Trinity, of the triune name of God, which shall last unto the World Without End.

And not merely that this name shall ever be on the tongues of the baptized, whatever their misery may be, but that, in their misery, in their tumult, God shall hear His name be called upon, and shall answer, for the Lord has spoken:

'And lo, I shall be with you always, even unto the end of the age.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Genesis 1:1-2:4; Acts 2:14a, 22-36; Matthew 28:16-20.