

When it comes to preaching on the Trinity, there's always the temptation to lapse into a theological or philosophical treatment of it. We identify the Trinity as a great mystery that cannot be explained, yet it's so central, so important, so fundamental to our faith.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says (in paragraph 234): "The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith."

All that's well and good; it's important for theologians and philosophers to grapple with the mysteries that we humans face, and try to shed some light or increased understanding on them.

I'd like to resist the temptation to speculate theologically and philosophically today, and talk about the Trinity as the most simple truth there is – a truth that every single one of us experiences every single day of our lives. When we identify our God as a Trinity, all we're really saying is that our God is a God in relationship – our God is a God of love.

Just think for a minutes of the experiences, the stories, the events in our lives that touch us most deeply – experiences like being in love, like a spouse caring for a spouse suffering from Alzheimer's or cancer, like witnessing a new birth, like supporting a

friend battling an addiction: all these experiences, these stories, these events are experiences of loving relationships. Instinctively, we know that we are at our best – our most moral, our most human, and our most divine – when we are in loving relationships. The reason for this is because **it is at these times that our *true* identity is revealed:** we are who and what we are created to be. We are made in the image and likeness of God; our most fundamental identity is to reflect God – God who is a Trinity, God whose very nature is a loving relationship.

The Trinity tells us that our God is not a solitary god, like the pagan gods. Our God is not a capricious or cruel or immoral god, like the Greek gods. The Trinity tells us that our God is relationship – Father, Son, and Spirit – and the basis of that relationship is love. You and I are made in that image. Being made in that image, it's only natural that we are most godly, most divine, most happy, most fulfilled, when we are in a loving relationship, when we too are "Trinity."

The converse is true as well: we are least ourselves, we are most unhappy, we are most **inhuman** when we are out of relationship, out of sync with the Trinity in whose image we are created. That's why the worst pain and illness in the world is to be out of relationship. Think of the emotions caused by a betrayal, a separation, the death of a spouse or a child, a divorce; think of *any* severe breaking of a relationship. Some people commit suicide over a broken love affair. These situations hurt so much because they go against the grain of who we are at our most fundamental level. At our most fundamental

level, we are beings meant to be in relationship with others – just like God: Father, Son, Spirit.

That's what the Trinity means; nothing terribly complicated about it! The challenge is always in being true to our nature, true to the person God created us to be, true to the love that called us into being.