

Trinity Sunday
June 10-11, 2017

“Seek His Face always with Burning Desire”

Readings: Ex 34:4-6, 8-9; 2 Cor. 13:11-13; John 3:16-18

It is safe to say that those who make time to come to Church on a summer weekend are the very ones who seek to know and see the “face of God” in the person of our Heavenly Father. On Trinity Sunday, we come face to face with the mystery of the Trinity, a “community of persons” known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Even the earliest and greatest thinkers in the Church knew that they were face to face with a reality impossible to penetrate.

St. Hilary, 4th c. convert and scholar, once remarked that thinking about God begins when one “stands before the certain reality” that God is God.¹ But here’s the catch...the only way to stand before God is in devotion, in humble adoration.² St. Hilary was thrust into the role as bishop just as the debate about the Trinity was heating up. But at heart, he was as practical as he was bright. St. Hilary used the image of a book. We will not understand what is written if we do not expect more from the book than we bring to it.

In other words, we must allow the reality of God to stretch our thoughts so that they become worthy of the God whom we seek. People can understand something intellectually, but it is only when we receive the gift of the Spirit in faith with the “gift of knowledge” that it becomes our own. “Only in receiving can we know.”³

We must face the reality that this journey to God will be filled with much mystery. If you try to take away the mystery, even for the noblest reasons, you will be disappointed. Your efforts will fail!

¹St. Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, 12.24; 1:18

² St. Hilary of Poitiers, “The Trinity” quoted in “Spirit of Early Christian Thought,” by Robert Louis Wilken, page 88.

³ St. Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, 2.35

Since God is ultimately unknowable, his essence remains always beyond us. While we cannot comprehend His *essence*, we are able to participate in God's love that reaches out to all. The knowledge of God begins first in our own receptivity to His presence, in being radically open to what has been revealed.⁴ We can begin with the Creed, the Church's Symbol of Faith. Meditate upon the Creed.

The name we give God is unique in that it is a name we are told to call Him. The ancient gods had long lists of names. God is too holy to be named in the Old Testament. Christ teaches a simpler name, "our Father." In the OT, the term *father* appears only occasionally as a name for God, but it is used by Jesus 170 times in the New Testament.

We now have a name, but even more than that. We have a relationship. God is now our Father. His very name implies a relationship with us. As the psalms teach us, we should "Seek His face always." St. Augustine could add to the psalmist this sentiment: "*Seek His Face always with Burning Desire.*"⁵ King David is not speaking in his psalm about knowing God as we know other things, but about intimacy with God, delight in God, loving God, knowing even as one is known. There can be no finding without a change in the one seeking. Are we ready to change when we seek His face?

As we come to know the God whom we seek, our finding will only lead to more seeking, and we will grow deeper and deeper in our relationship with the Mystery. While it may sound utterly frustrating, in reality we are drawn more and more into relationship with our loving Father, and we will desire more and more to continue to seek His face.

⁴ See Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, p. 88.

⁵ St. Augustine, *The Trinity* 15.28.51 "Quaeram faciem tuam semper ardentem."