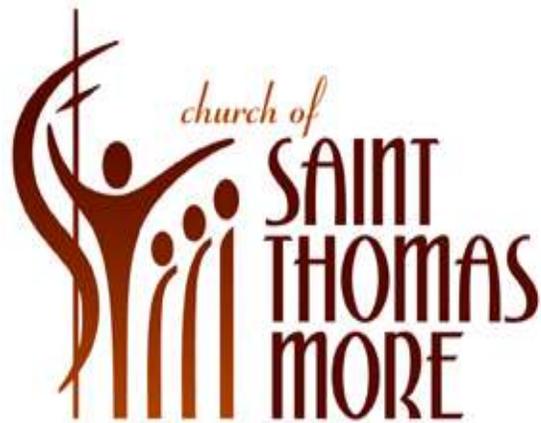


Trinity Sunday

On Pentecost, one of the ushers asked me if I knew what next week was. Thinking it was a quiz, I ventured, "Trinity Sunday?" I got that one right, but then he asked if I knew why it was special. I was stumped, searching my brain for an answer. Was it because we commemorate the decree of the Council of Nicea in 325 ending the Arian heresy? Or because we celebrate the great mystery of the Triune God? No, turns out it was special because we get to sing one of his favorite hymns: "Holy Holy Holy"!



That's another great reason to celebrate Trinity Sunday. This hymn of praise echoes St. John's words of the cherubim and seraphim in Revelation 4:

"Day and night they do not stop exclaiming: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." (Rev 4: 8)

The hymn boldly proclaims the doctrine from the very first Ecumenical Council. Think of it as the Vatican II of the early church. The council was convened by the Emperor Constantine in the year 325 AD because of the Arian heresy. This heresy denied the divinity of Jesus. It "regarded the Son of God as standing midway between God and creatures." (The New Catholic Dictionary).

The Council of Nicea adopted the doctrine of the divinity of Christ which "expressed the identity of the Son in essence, nature, substance with the Father." (Ibid) Their decision has held in all orthodox Christian churches to this day. We proclaim the Nicene creed every Sunday:

"We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father."

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified."

Getting back to our hymn, composer John Dykes set the words written by Anglican Bishop Reginald Heber to music in 1861. He called the tune NICEA, in honor of the council. (You often find hymn tunes noted in capital letters in the fine print.) The words of the last line of the hymn recall the words of their statement: "God in three persons, blessed Trinity."

Steve Raml
Director of Liturgy & Music