

Salvation in the Trinity

Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Introduction

According to the Church fathers, the doctrine of the Trinity is the cornerstone of our Christian faith. They have made this clear in the *ATHANASIAN CREED*, which we will confess together in a few minutes. It begins: *Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold to the catholic faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without a doubt perish eternally. And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.* The next 22 lines go on to explain that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each God in and of themselves, yet there is only one God. Our fallen, finite minds cannot comprehend how this can be; we merely accept it on faith. This is most certainly true. We are here on this Festival of the Holy Trinity to celebrate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and what this Trinity has done for us, especially concerning our salvation.

Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification

It's not unusual to attribute different duties or roles to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For example, when we pray, we sometimes think of praying **to** the Father as Christ taught us in the Lord's Prayer, **through** the Son since He is our Mediator, as Paul calls Him in **1 Timothy 2:5**, and **in** the Spirit because Paul tells us to pray in the Spirit in **Ephesians 6**. The truth is we pray to God. Since Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each God in and of Himself, our prayers can be addressed to any of them. Or, more properly, all of them. The *Small Catechism* divides the *APOSTLES' CREED* into three sections, Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. The Father is the focus of the first; the Son is the focus of the Second, and the Holy Spirit, working through the church is the focus of the third. Yet in **John 1**, we read that all things were created by the Word, or the Son. **Genesis 1:2** says that *the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*, meaning the Holy Spirit was involved in Creation as well. Let's look at the role each plays in our redemption.

The Son, Our Redeemer

Obviously, The Son is our Redeemer, since He is the One who became a man and after living a holy life, died in our place. The Father didn't die, nor did the Spirit, but only the Son (see the *Small Catechism*, Section 4, Question 10).

The Father, the One Who Sends

So, the Son died for our sins. What is the role of the Father in all this? Jesus says in **John 5** (read **John 5:19-24**). The Son can do nothing apart from the will of the Father who sent Him. Jesus also says in **John 3:16**, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."* Jesus doesn't do anything apart from the Father. The Father gave and sent His Son. If the Father had not sent the Son, we would not have salvation.

The Holy Spirit, the Promise

Verse 33 says that Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, and that *having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing*. Chrysostom says that the Holy Spirit is the Promise because He was promised before the passion of Christ. In **John 14** Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Two chapters later, He explains more about this promise (read **John 16:13-14**). Augustine said that Jesus received the Spirit in His humanity and poured out the Spirit in His divinity. The Holy Spirit leads and guides us, and He is the One who works faith in us to believe in Jesus and receive forgiveness of sins. Without the Spirit to give us faith and illumine us, we would not have salvation.

Together for Our Salvation

So, the Father sent the Son to die for us and the Holy Spirit works faith in us to believe in the Son. While the Son is our Redeemer, our salvation is in the Trinity.

The Trinity in Communion

We also see the Holy Trinity in the Sacrament of the Altar. When we receive the bread and wine, we are receiving the body and blood of the Son. We can only receive His body and blood because He has risen from the dead and ascended to the Father. It is the Father who raised Him from the dead and lifted Him up to heaven as we saw two weeks ago. It is only through the faith that the Holy Spirit gives us that we are able to receive Christ's body and blood. That's why the doctrine of the Trinity is so important. That's why we celebrate the Festival of the Holy Trinity today. **OUR SALVATION IS TRULY IN THE TRINITY.**

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
