

***Be born in HIS likeness (Jh 3:1-17)***

\* Friends, with coming summer season the brownish landscape has already turned into green. However people from urban areas don't enjoy very much aroma of fresh grass as the country guys do; the city folk can only dream or they need to go. Now let's do it in a virtual level. Imagine you are among the first European colonists who looked for a land of their dreams. Sitting at a wagon with their kids you are heading toward the Middle East by trackless wilderness. Finally in the later spring you enter onto prairies; suddenly you are shocked after seeing the endless meadow ahead that seemed to you as the green ocean. Surely it is your unforgettable experience of God's creative mind. And experiencing God's creativity the devotional hearts, including us, couldn't remain silent in that moment. # 801

\* While we are still under the impression of the works God has made, we've not noticed that we are in the beginning of another half of Church Year, called "The Time of the Church." Starting after the Pentecost it will last for six months up to the penitential time of Advent. The liturgical color for this season is green that should emphasize the spiritual growth into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Likewise vegetables are brought from seed to flower to seed during the summer so we are, having been born from above continue to grow in Spirit and knowledge, (Joh 3:3).

\* Today is the first Sunday after Pentecost. Traditionally it always speaks out for the Holy Trinity, the Father-the Son-the Holy Spirit. We start from the prayer focusing on the Goodness of the Blessed Trinity. "Dear Father, as you born us in likeness your begotten and only Son Jesus Christ we ask you for right heart and mind to see You through your almighty acts in our personal life. Make us able to encompass your awesomeness so that we continue our pilgrimage with faith and fear of God. Let your holy name will be glorified in us and through us, One God, Father-Son-and the -Holy Spirit." Amen

\* When theologians from different denominations discuss over the nature of the Trinity they compromise with each other on the matter of substance, persons, and relations. One group accepts Trinitarian God, tending to explain His nature and the personal attributes in philosophical and theological terms, like Roman Catholic, for example. Others, who also accept Trinity, prefer do not go beyond formulations of the Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasius Creeds, like Lutherans, for instance. And the remnant holds on Nontrinitarian positions which include Binitarianism (one deity/two persons); Unitarianism (one deity/one person); the Oneness belief held by certain Pentecostal groups; Modalism, Mormon Church view of the Godhead as three separate beings who are one in purpose rather than essence.

\* But despite of diversity in teaching and belief the orthodox and heterodox Christians with one accord say, 'we believe in Jesus Christ.' However, the true confessors are distinguished by virtue of their true beliefs. The proclamation of the Holy Trinity is the mark of the true church! However, we should not wonder that many people reject Trinity; rather we might wonder that we believe in Trinity.

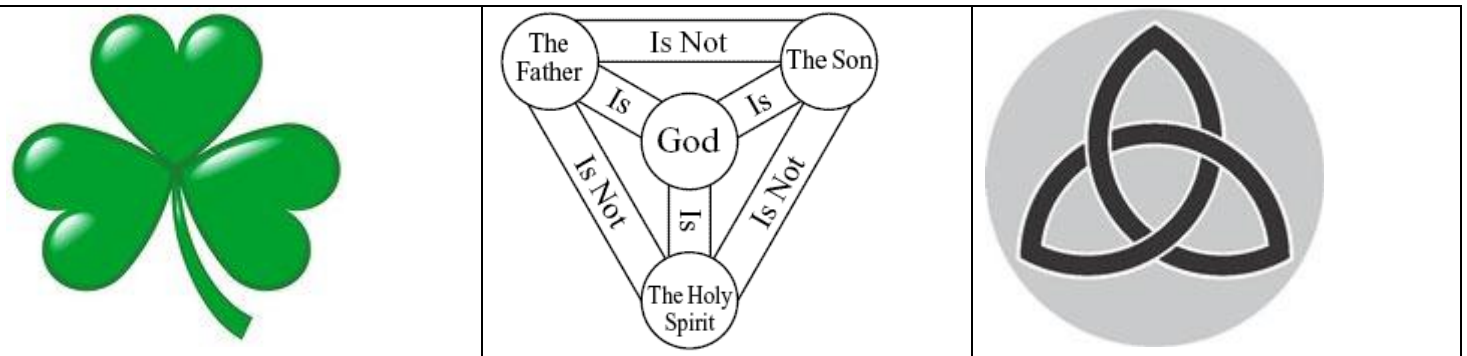
\* Reflecting on this insight let's hear a story from St. Augustine, the great theologian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Once upon a time Augustine was walking on the beach thinking about the mystery of the Trinity. Then he saw a boy who had dug a hole in the sand and was going out to the sea again and again and bringing some water to pour into the hole. St. Augustine asked him, Oh boy, "What are you doing?" "I'm going to pour the entire ocean into this hole." "That is impossible, the whole ocean will not fit in the hole you have made" said St. Augustine. The boy replied, "And you cannot fit the Trinity in your tiny little brain." The story concludes by saying that the boy vanished as St. Augustine had been talking to an angel. This story tends to say that we can not grasp the essence of God by our mind.

\* So we are not given to understand rather we are given to wonder. Now, following this advice I recall for you the Caspar Friedrich's painting, *The Wanderer above a sea of Fog*. You should remember this illustration from my last sermon. It says about the man, whom

the painter called, *The Wander*. Staying on a cliff the Wonder observes the spectacular landscape and the sky. His eyes capture only two rocky giants and a few clouds above, that's it. He can't see anything else in front because the fog covers the land. Also he can't see anything else behind due to the human physiology.

This imagery can be applied to all humanity in attempting to grasp God who chose to be hidden.

\* Friends, the goal of this sermon is just to give you proper direction; it is not a theological treatise. You know, tons of papers were written about Trinity, you might don't have time to read even one. Truly there would not be enough room in universe to fill it up with academical papers. But in spite of such human creativity nobody can understand coexistence of the Tree Persons in one Godhead. That is why our theologians prefer to believe rather than to explain the mystery. Even Apostle Paul is wondering about mystery of hidden God, "Now I know in part," he said in (1 Cor 13:12). Same in mind the reformer Martin Luther, he wrote, it is "iniquitous, not to say godless, for those who, trusting in their own powers, speculate concerning the supreme mystery of the Trinity." Or Philip Melanchthon, "we would do better to worship the mysteries of the Divinity than to investigate them." But there are some interesting ideas were given by the Holy Spirit through devotional people. For example, St Patrick, he used the three-leafed shamrock which refers to the combination of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Here it is the three most outstanding pictographs regarding Trinity.



\* But whom do we need to address foremost thanks and adoration for making the Blessed Trinity knowledgeable? Friends we would be never known the Father if the Son didn't come. We would be never known the Holy Spirit if the Son didn't dwelled among us. Our Lord is the eternal Logos. He mysteriously revealed himself in human flesh, "and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth," (Joh 1:14). The hidden God became known as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit exclusively by virtue of Christ's actions. Those who saw Jesus also saw the Father and the Spirit. In (Joh 14:9) Jesus says, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" The Trinity was seen when Christ was born, the Trinity was seen when Christ was baptized, The Trinity was seen during Christ' transfiguration, or when he arose Lazarus from the dead. The Trinity was seen in the cross and in the empty tomb. Through the very acts of Christ the Blessed Trinity became knowledgeable so that we may believe, pray, receive forgiveness, help in time of needs and finally be saved from eternal condemnation. Jesus is the Lord, the person of the Blessed Trinity, your and my Saviour.

\* Now come in the end of the endless subject with beautiful hymn devoted to the Blessed Trinity, ( # 805 LSB).

Beloved, may the LORD blesses us to grow in His likeness.

Amen, Amen, Amen