

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH FLOWS FROM THE MISSION OF THE SON

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Homily for Trinity Sunday, June 19, 2011
Exod. 34:4-6, 8-9, Dan. 3, 2 Cor. 13:11-14, John 3:16-18

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

The only Son of God was sent by the Father from the realms of light into the darkness of the world to introduce us into this divine splendor through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the mission of the Son. The Church is the community that believes in the Son and receives eternal life from him. Those who believe in the Son are illuminated by him when they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which the Son sends them from the Father. They have a new life through the Son. They live through him and draw life from him (John 1:16). As the Son lives through the Father, so do those who believe in the Son live through the Son. Because he lives, we live. Because of the Son, we live a new and illuminated life, with the life of God in us. “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). “And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16). “Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19). We now live a new life in God in the light because of the Son and through him. “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me” (John 6:57).

The mission of the Church flows from the mission of the Son and continues the Son’s mission in the world. We are illuminated by the Son and sent by him to continue his mission. “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (John 20:21). We who believe in the Son are born again in him (John 3:3) and are illuminated by him. We are saved from our sins and have a new life in him, a risen life (Col. 3:1-2), already in this world in the risen Christ (Rom. 6:4). The Son then sends us unto the ends of the earth with a mission to the world, to the nations—*ad gentes*—to preach Christ to them, to evangelize them, so that they too might be illuminated and transformed and have a new life in God through the incarnation of his only Son. This is a direct revelation from God, more exalted than all other manifestations of God in his creation, and it is for the entire world, for all of humanity.

God gave his only Son to the world to give his life for us. He came to sacrifice himself for us unto death on a cross, to redeem us from our sins. God punished our sins in him instead of in us. "Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). He paid our debt of suffering in punishment for our sins, and for the sin of Adam, so that all who believe in him might be justified by his sacrifice for us. He is our substitute. Instead of punishing us, God punished his own Son, and let us go free, absolved and forgiven if only we believe in him, invoking the merits of his death on the cross for us, repenting and confessing our sins. God himself suffered our punishment for us in the person of his Son.

Hence we have a new life in Christ. Christ rose from the dead in the glory of the Father. His resurrection shows that his death was accepted by the Father as a ransom for us (Matt. 20:28), so that we might rise with the Son to live an illuminated and risen life, already in this present life, in the risen Christ (Col. 3:1-2; Rom. 6:4). This makes us the Church of Christ in the world, the community of those who believe in the Son and are illuminated and saved by him. The Church then has a mission to the world, the same mission as the Son, a continuation of his mission, to spread this light and splendor in the world by evangelizing the nations, announcing to them the good news that there is salvation and a special revelation of God in his only Son for the entire world, for all of humanity.

Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal. 1:4). It is "Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). It is "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). It is "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). "He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:15). God "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32). "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Christ is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). He bore the curse of God which we should have borne for our sins as our substitute before the Father, so that we might be

absolved and set free, when we believe in him and invoke the merits of his death for us on the cross.

Christ is also our perfect act of worship before the Father in the Holy Spirit, offering himself in love and perfect submission to the Father on the cross. We unite ourselves to Christ in his perfect sacrifice of love, offering ourselves with him to the Father in the Holy Spirit. We especially do this in the sacrifice of the Mass, which makes us present at Calvary at the very moment of the offering of his one and only sacrifice for the salvation of the world. Thus through the liturgy of the Church, we can enter into the inner life of the Trinity, offering ourselves up with the Son in his perfect act of worship, his perfect sacrifice of himself in love to his Father in the Holy Spirit.