Today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Trinity. For me and maybe for some of you this is the most difficult of the church’s teachings to get my head and heart around. When I’ve been asked to explain the Holy Trinity my first and best answer has been, “it’s a mystery.” A simple yet unfulfilling answer for the person asking the question and for me a way to escape talking about a subject I hadn’t come to grips with. Preparing for this homily caused me to do just that. I had to look at scripture, read commentaries, ponder, search my heart and pray. I hope this homily will help you with your understanding of the Holy Trinity as it has helped me understand a little better this teaching of our church.

Let me start with words from the gospel, “When they all saw him, they worshipped, but they doubted.” Isn’t this just like us humans? The disciple’s faith helps them worship, just like our faith calls us to worship today. Their faith is combined with doubt, just like mine is. Maybe my name should be Thomas and not Carl. The disciples were closer to Jesus than perhaps any other human beings and there was still doubt about who this person was, what was his mission and what was he asking of the disciples? The tone of Jesus’ response to this unbelief is strong and confident, qualities he’d like to give to this fearful group. Their doubt does not deter Jesus from entrusting them with his mission. He tells them and us to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. Jesus their friend and counselor, encourages them with each word and invites them into closer intimacy by living out the ministry he entrusts to them.

Perhaps because Jesus understands their human weakness, he promises to be with them in the work they and us, are called to. Their task and ours is sometimes a discouraging, overwhelming, and frightening one but Jesus ever hopeful promised to be with us always. He is present and will continue to be. He is “Emmanuel, God with us.” The divine presence with us, his church when we make
decisions, study, pray, preach, baptize and teach. All this seems to imply God the Father and Jesus the Son. What about the Holy Spirit? Jesus is the incarnate God. God in the flesh. He called God, Father. He promised to send the spirit, the Advocate, the supporter who would remind his disciples about Jesus. I will never fully comprehend or understand all of what it means for God to be a Trinity. I cannot “explain” the mystery of the Trinity, but this mystery is one that we are marked with from the beginning of our life of faith. At our baptism these words were spoken, “God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people.” This past Sunday I had the privilege of baptizing five young children into the Catholic faith. There is for me, no more “holy” time then to be the minister for a baptism as I welcome in your name these children into the family of God with the words Jesus spoke, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Brothers and sisters, no matter how much I try to describe what the Trinity is, I could never fully communicate the depth of its meaning because ultimately the Trinity is about relationship. In the Trinity we find our identity as the people of God. We become members of the family of God. As our patron Saint Paul says in the second reading we receive, “……a spirit of adoption through whom we cry, ‘Abba Father!’ …..we are children of God.” If the Trinity is ultimately about relationships and I believe it is, then like any relationship with a loved one, we can only understand it fully by entering into it with our hearts.

Several years ago, during my diaconal formation our class attended a Romanian Orthodox Catholic church to observe their Sunday Liturgy. I entered the usual way with a sign of the cross and then observed other people as they entered the church. What I noticed really struck me. They made the sign of the cross in a way that was new for me. Over the years I have observed the sign of the cross made in many ways but had never seen it done this way. Demonstrate.

What else is this simple gesture but the Trinity expressed in a way that even children could understand? Here is a quote from a resource called Living Liturgy that offers an explanation of the Trinity and I quote, “When we make the sign of the cross on our bodies, we recall that everything we
do begins and ends with God. We mark ourselves with a sign that identifies **who we are** and **whose we are**. It is a sign that physically encompasses our entire being, reminding us that we are drawn into the life and love of the Trinity, a life-giving and self-sacrificing relationship between Father and Son in the love of the Spirit. The work of the Trinity is to bring blessing to all creation; and all creation is made for being in relationship with the Creator. We first learn the significance of this sign (**and thus the meaning of the Trinity**) usually from our parents or family and friends who have shared with us their faith. We learn that being in a loving relationship with God is not an abstract idea but is a relationship we first encounter through the love of another person for us.

By loving others, we embody and deepen our understanding of the meaning of Trinity.” End of quote.

**PAUSE**

In the Trinity we find our identity as the people of God.