

Hom Prayer 2017

Today is Trinity Sunday so this is only Sunday a year I am supposed to do a teaching on the Trinity, a doctrine of the church. The word Trinity tries to communicate a central Truth revealed by Jesus and that is that God is Father, Jesus himself is God, and God is Holy Spirit. We only believe in one God but we experience God in three different ways, as Father, as Son and as Spirit. The word "Trinity" does not occur in the bible, not even once. Where do we get the idea from if the word Trinity isn't in the bible? We get the teaching from Jesus.

I spent some time this week reading through a collection of sermons I have and then I went to youtube where there are video teachings on the Trinity and then I made a decision. All the talk in the world about the Trinity means absolutely nothing if one has not had a personal experience of Jesus. Once one believes Jesus is God and that Jesus has spoken the truth of God then no one has a problem accepting the Trinity. In 1950 I think it may have been safe to say that most Christian people knew Jesus as God. I don't think that is true anymore. Now I know some of you have great faith, certainly faith greater than mine but if you know any young people I think you will agree with me that they are no longer sure of who Jesus is.

So the immediate challenge every pastor faces is how do we get people connected to Jesus. How do we get people to open up their hearts to the Words of Jesus?

How do we get people to a place where they might have an experience of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

To that end I think a word about how to connect with God is more in need than a discourse on the Trinity.

We connect God through prayer. Today I'd like to share with you one form of prayer that many millions of people over the centuries have found helpful toward developing a personal relationship with God. It's a form of prayer formulated by St. Ignatius of Loyola many centuries ago called the EXAMEN. I believe that if we are serious about a relationship with Jesus and use this prayer for a month you are likely to experience God's presence. I have prepared handouts for everyone to take home this week with a short description of each of the five steps and then some inspirational bible quotes that may help to focus on what St. Ignatius wants us to do.

There are five steps to take in this prayer.

The Examen (This Examen is from Crosswalk.com found in the section "night prayers".)

Written by St. Ignatius Loyola, the Examen is a daily process for prayerfully reflecting on your day.

1. Remember God's presence.

Even after a trying day, God will quiet your soul as you remember His presence and intentionally seek to enter into it. Remember He's with you. Invite Him to make Himself present to you.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" Mt. 18:20 God does not have to be summoned from a distant place for God is always

with us. Simply say His Name, "Jesus". Be aware of His Presence.

"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God]" Rev. 21:3

"I call upon you; answer me, O God. Turn your ear to me; hear my prayer" Psalm 17:6

"I will never forsake you or abandon you." Heb. 13:5

"Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God" 1 John 4:15

2. Respond to Him with thanks.

Giving thanks gives God glory and helps us look on the bright side of a bad day. What small blessings can you thank God for?

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" 1 Thes.5: 16-18

"All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change. " James 1:17-18

"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" Phil 4:6-7.

"Shout joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; worship the Lord with cries of gladness; come before him with joyful song . . . Enter the temple gates with praise, its courts with thanksgiving. Give thanks to God, bless his name; good indeed is the Lord, Whose love endures forever, whose faithfulness lasts through every age" Psalm 100.

3. Reflect on how God showed Himself to you.

God reveals himself through scripture, but we also see glimpses of him in nature, events, and people. Sometimes

He shows up loudly through miraculous, divine intervention. Other times He shows Himself quietly through the beauty of a flower or an earnest conversation. As you look back over your day, can you identify moments where you sensed God's revelation or intervention?

God reveals Himself through Jesus: "He is the image of the invisible God . . . For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible. . ." Col. 1:15

God reveals Himself through the Holy Spirit: The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you" John 14:26

God reveals Himself through creation: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder's craft" Psalm 19:1.

God reveals Himself through the Word of Scripture: "Your word is a lamp for my feet, light for my path . . . Lord, teach me your decrees." Psalm 119:105, 108

This list could go on to include all of nature, God's intervention in human history, just about everything one way or another can reveal God. The point here is to examine just one day of your life to see God's fingerprint somewhere.

4. Repent of your failings.

I don't like recognizing my own sin, but repentance is key to continual renewal in our relationship with God. As you reflect on your day, remember specific points where you failed. Bring your shortcomings before God and ask Him to forgive you

Remember that story of the two men in the Temple? One stands in the back and says: Have mercy on me a sinner. The other man stands in the front very proud of all he does for the poor. This posture, humility, a consciousness of sin, is the hardest posture for

people to take because most people do not think they have any sin. That is part of the reason people don't go to confession they don't have any sins to confess. How about sins of omission? Have any of us, even me, your pastor done enough for the millions of refugees from war or poverty homeless in the world. Have any of us truly loved others the Way Jesus did? Sin simply means "missing the mark" not that one is a "bad" person.

5. Resolve to grow.

God is in the business of changing us, so don't let your failings discourage or define you. His mercies are always new. Accept His forgiveness. Ask Him for grace to change. Is there anything you need to make right or anyone you need to apologize to? What can you do differently tomorrow?

"[P]ursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness" 1 Tim. 6:11

"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick tempered, it does not brood over in jury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" 1 Cor. 13:4-7.