



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

510 N. Prospect Ave. • Alma, MI 48801
Office (989)463-5370 • Fax (989)463-1369

MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

605 S. Franklin St. • St. Louis, MI 48880
Office (989)681-5080 • Fax (989)681-2887



Dear Parish Family,

June 19, 2011

Happy Father's Day! To all fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and spiritual fathers (uncles, brothers, etc.) I wish countless blessings upon you. Let us remember in our prayers those fathers who have died, may they rest in peace in the presence of the Trinity.

Today is also Trinity Sunday. This particular day has great meaning for me. My first public Masses were offered on Trinity Sunday. Perhaps I shared with some of you the video of that Mass, which I proudly carry around on my iPod™ Touch®. My mentor and spiritual director for many years had a profound devotion to the Trinity. May we all be drawn into the heart of the Most Blessed Trinity, as is our birthright through our trinitarian Baptism.

We have reached the end of our 2011 Catholic Services Appeal. If you haven't returned your CSA card, or if you've misplaced it, hopefully you will receive a new one in the mail. If not, please stop by the parish offices to get one. Remember, it's not so much the amount you give; but that you return the card and provide support through prayers.

Pope Benedict XVI's general prayer intention for the entire month of June is, "that priests, united to the Heart of Christ, may always be true witnesses of the caring and merciful love of God." Please pray for all priests living and deceased! God bless you! Summer is NOT a time to take a vacation from God! Keep praying!

Fr. David

Sacred Signs and Symbols

Light, Fire, and Flame

On a cold, dull day in late autumn, when darkness is coming on, and the wide plain below as far as eye can reach is empty of life, and the dead leaves crunch underfoot, and we are feeling very much alone, a strong natural desire comes over us for human contact. Then, suddenly, at a turn of the road, a light beams out. It comes like the answer to a summons, like a thing expectation called for, like a missing link in a series suddenly supplied.

Or, you are sitting at dusk in a dreary room between blank walls among uncongenial furniture. A familiar step approaches, a practiced hand sets the hearth to rights, the kindling crackles, a flame shoots up and the room glows with comfortable warmth from the fireplace. The change is as pleasant as when a cold inexpressive face suddenly lights up with a friendly smile.

Fire is closely allied to life. It is one of the best symbols we have for the soul within that makes us live. Like fire, life is warm and radiant, never still, eager for what is out of reach. When we watch the leaping tongues of flame, as they follow every current of the draught, soaring up not to be diverted, radiating waves of light and heat, we feel how exact the parallel is, how deep the kinship. This fire that forces its way through the intractable material that impedes it and reaches out to touch with light the things around and make for them a center of illumination – what an image it is of that mysterious flame in us that has been set alight to penetrate the whole of nature and provide it with a hearth!

And if this aspiring, irresistible, life of ours were allowed to express itself outwardly, if it were given the least outlet, it also would break through and burst into flame.

And with what strength it should burn before the altar where at all times it rightfully belongs! We should stand there close to the Sacramental Presence where God addresses himself to us and we address ourselves to God, concentrating our force and our intelligence in prayer and attention. We recognize in the lamp before the altar the image and representation of what our life should be. Its flame is never allowed to go out.

As material light, it has of course nothing to say to God. It is for you to make it an expression of your soul, like it burning out the force of your life in flame and light close to the Holy Presence.

We cannot learn this all at once. It must be striven for. But each moment of quiet illumination will bring you nearer to God, and will carry you back among people at peace. You leave the sanctuary lamp before the tabernacle in your stead, saying to God, "Lord, it stands for my soul, which is at all times in thy presence."

From: Romano Guardini, "Sacred Signs."

LIFE IN THE TRINITY

The Trinity could be proposed as the “high standard” for Christian life; and we must look to see what we should “remove” from ourselves to approach the divine simplicity of the Trinity. The answer is obvious: we should remove the culpable duplicity that the Bible calls hypocrisy. The aim of this reflection is “contemplating the Trinity to overcome the hateful hypocrisy of the world.”

Jesus called hypocrisy a leaven, “the leaven of the Pharisees” (*Luke 12:1*). It really is a leaven that “leavens the whole lump” (*1 Corinthians 5:6*), that is, it can corrupt all our actions, not only evil ones, but also, and especially, good ones.

It is surprising how this sin – the one most denounced by God in the Bible and by Christ in the gospels – so rarely enters into our ordinary examinations of conscience. The greatest act of hypocrisy would be to hide hypocrisy – to hide it from ourselves, of course, because it is impossible to hide it from God. “If we say we have no sin [*let us indeed add hypocrisy*], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (*1 John 1:8-9*). Hypocrisy is largely overcome at the very moment it is recognized.

Every person, wrote Blaise Pascal, has two lives: one is the true life, and the other is the imaginary life lived in one’s own or others’ opinions. We work tirelessly to embellish and preserve our imaginary selves, and we neglect our true selves. If we have some virtue or some merit, we take great pains to make it known, in one way or another, to enhance our imaginary self by it. We are ready to diminish our true selves to add to our imaginary selves, even to the point of being cowardly if it would make us seem courageous, and even to giving up our life provided that people would talk about it.

To resist hypocrisy better, we can try to discover the origin and significance of that term. The word comes from the language of theater. At the beginning it simply meant “recitation, acting on stage.” The intrinsic element of falsehood that occurs in every stage representation did not go unnoticed by the ancients in spite of its acknowledged high moral and artistic value. This was the source of the negative judgment on the acting profession, making it restricted to slaves during certain periods. The sorrow and the joy represented and emphasized are not real sorrow and real joy but appearance, a fiction. The

exterior words and attitudes do not correspond to the inner reality of the heart.

We use the word “fiction” in a neutral or even a positive sense. The ancients gave it the sense that it really has: make-believe. What was negative in stage fiction was transferred to the word “hypocrisy.” After originally being a neutral term, it became one of the few words with an exclusively negative meaning. There are those who brag about being proud or dissolute; but no one brags about being a hypocrite.

The origin of the word puts us on track to discover the nature of hypocrisy. It is turning life into a stage where we perform for the public; it means putting on a mask and ceasing to be a person in order to become a character.

This innate tendency in human beings has been increased dramatically by the current culture, which is dominated by images, the film industry, and especially television. René Descartes said, *Cogito, ergo sum*, “I think, therefore I am.” Today that tends to be substituted by “I appear, therefore, I am.” A famous French moralist defined hypocrisy as “an homage vice pays to virtue.” In our world today, we see a kind of upside-down hypocrisy. People invent sins they did not commit so as not to seem less open-minded than others. Young people brag about escapades that, fortunately, they have not experienced, so as not to seem better than their companions. Hypocrisy, says Bruce Marshall in one of his novels, has now become the homage that virtue pays to vice.

Unfortunately, along with this upside-down hypocrisy, the old hypocrisy that is a trap, especially for pious and religious people, also continues to exist. Wherever spiritual values, piety, and virtues are most highly esteemed, the strongest temptation is to pretend to have them – so as not to seem to be without them.

If we ask why hypocrisy is such an abomination to the Lord, the answer is clear. Hypocrisy unseats God, puts him in second place, because creatures – the audience – are put in first place. Hypocrisy, then, is essentially a lack of faith, a form of idolatry in which creatures are given the place of the Creator.

The worst thing one can do after hearing or reading a description of hypocrisy is to use it to judge others. It is precisely those people to whom Jesus applies the name hypocrites: “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (*Matthew 7:5*).

Excerpted from:

Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., “Contemplating the Trinity.”