

Part I Holy Trinity Sunday, June 14, 1992

One summer morning in 1992, when I was an Episcopalian, I preached on Holy Trinity Sunday. This is the text for the homily.

In the Name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today is Trinity Sunday, a glorious day in the life of the Church. We have followed our Lord through His Passion, His death on the Cross for our salvation, His mighty Resurrection and His glorious Ascension. Last Sunday, we celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, the coming of the promised Holy Spirit.

Trinity Sunday is a time to recall the very basic truth that One God exists in Three Persons. We'll have a look at the history behind the doctrine of the Trinity and consider some very simple examples in everyday life of how three can be one. Finally, we'll see how all this applies to our own lives.

First of all, the mystery of the Trinity. How can three be one?

Shelley, a friend in the parish, and I discovered that one of the things we have in common, is a love for the old Nancy Drew mystery stories. We like the

really old ones, which were published back in the 1930's and 1940's.

Nancy Drew is an intrepid young detective who lives in River Heights with her father, Carson Drew, a prominent attorney. Since the death of Nancy's mother, the family has been cared for by a devoted housekeeper named Hannah Gruen. No matter how challenging the mystery, Nancy, with the help of her chums, Bess and George, always solves it!

Shelley is a very mature young woman and perhaps has outgrown Nancy Drew. In my case, I'm not so sure!

During my years in the seminary, after studying heavy-duty subjects such as moral theology and medical ethics, I liked to relax for a little while in the evenings by reading something lighter, like Nancy Drew or the Anne of Green Gables books, while consuming Junior Mints!

I'm not sure even Nancy Drew could solve the mystery of the Trinity. How can God be One and yet Three at the same time?

The early Church struggled with this also. After our Lord returned to his Father and our Father in heaven, the brand-new Church was faced with spelling out its beliefs. It became very important to spell out the belief in the Holy Trinity.

The reason it was so important was that the Church was being infiltrated by a heresy called Arianism, so named (I'm sad to say) for a priest named Arius. Back then, as now, the Church was more often attacked from within than from without.

What Arius did was to deny that Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God. His Bishop, Alexander, was pretty upset by this and condemned Arius.

Well, Arius did not take the hint, but continued willfully to propagate this error. All of this was taking place in the fourth century.

People were getting really bent out of shape by this, so the Emperor Constantine called for a big Church Council at Nicea in 325 A.D. This is where we get the Nicene Creed, which we will recite in a little while. This creed came into being to defend orthodoxy, which means "right belief" as opposed to heresy.

In the Nicene Creed, we state that Jesus was of one Being with the Father. The Greek word was "homoousion," meaning "of one substance."

We also state that "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son." Those words "and the Son" (also called the "Filioque") have quite a history behind them too.