

Holy Trinity Sunday ~ Given at St. Michael's, Gastonia, NC, at Fr. Andrew Templeton's First Mass ~ 15 June 2025

- Fr. Andrew Templeton, reverend fathers, seminarians, family and friends of Fr. Templeton, and parishioners of St. Michael's, it is my great pleasure to be here with you for this very happy event.
- After many years of study, discernment, and perseverance, you, Fr. Templeton, have finally joined the most sublime, most mysterious, and most joyful of fraternities: the sacred priesthood of Jesus Christ. As your friend and now your brother, I welcome you to our ranks; we're blessed to have you!
- I also want to thank you, Fr. Templeton, for this privilege of preaching your Mass of Thanksgiving. It has been a great joy to have had a small hand in your formation and that of your Bravo brothers these past 8 years, and I'm very touched that you would ask me to do this.
- You are offering this Mass on the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity – the feast celebrating the central mystery of our Faith: that our one God exists as a Trinity of Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- This belief in the Most Holy Trinity is a belief shared by all Christians: Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Evangelicals alike.
- Indeed, this belief about the nature of God is what sets us apart from every other religion and conception of God. No one but Christians understands God in this way. To be a Christian absolutely requires that one hold this Trinitarian understanding of the Almighty.
- Perhaps most of us take it for granted that God exists as a Trinity of Persons, having accepted this truth as young children when we first learned to pray. But for those who approach Christianity from another faith, the Trinity is a difficult concept to grasp.
- Truly, how can we understand that God is both Three and One? It is a mystery as high as the skies and as deep as the oceans, a truth too profound for the human intellect to fully comprehend in this life.
- And therefore it is a truth simply to be accepted with love and obedience, yet not blindly – for our knowledge of the Trinity comes from Christ Himself.
- Jesus revealed the nature of the Trinity to His apostles during His time on earth, and thus we can have full confidence in our belief that our One God exists as Three Persons.
- Yet merely believing in the Trinity is not enough. We cannot simply acknowledge the truth of the Holy Trinity without also worshiping the Holy Trinity. For the nature of God compels man to worship Him.
- And this is where you come in, Fr. Templeton.
- Now that you have been ordained as a priest, it will be your duty and your very sublime privilege to render proper worship to God through your offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
- Yesterday at your ordination, Bishop Martin placed the paten and chalice into your freshly chrismated hands, saying: "Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Cross of Christ." What does this mean?
- It means that you must strive to penetrate the mysteries of our Faith as best you can through your prayer and study, most especially the mystery of the Cross of Christ, allowing it to shape and form you.
- It means that, as priests, we must be resolved to unite ourselves ever so closely to Christ and to strive to become more like Him by joyfully sacrificing our own needs and wants for the sake of the salvation of those entrusted to us. That's what Christ did for us all on Calvary, and that is the essence of priesthood.
- As priests we are called to live at the foot of the cross, to gather the blood of Christ as it falls from His holy wounds and to dispense it to all who are entrusted to us. Ours is a life of sacrificial service to the people of God for the sake of helping them grow in holiness.
- Our strength to manage this herculean task comes from the Mass. And, as we offer the Mass and strive to imitate our Lord's gift of self in the Mass, we render God proper worship.
- Indeed, the Mass is the most perfect form and act of worship; it is the very best way to render homage to the Most Holy Trinity. Why? Because each Mass renews Christ's perfect sacrifice on Calvary.

- Each Mass renews the merits of Christ's passion: His terrible and unrelenting sufferings that began in the Garden of Gethsemane on Holy Thursday night and that continued unabated until He finally commended His spirit into the Father's hands on Calvary.
- Yet the renewal of the merits of Jesus' passion is only one aspect of the Mass. In the Mass we also see the human will of Jesus coalesce and unite with the divine will of the Father, and all by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Remember: if our Lord hadn't *willed* to be crucified and suffer all that He did, there would be no perfect homage rendered to the Father, and Heaven would not be open to us.
- And just as Christ offered to the Father His whole will on Calvary, at Mass, we who stand in His place must offer our whole will – our entire life and self to God – even unto death. Through us priests doing this very thing, Christ renews His gift of self He made to the Father on Calvary.
- In this way, we render God the same adoration, reparation, thanksgiving, and supplication that Jesus did on Calvary. And this is our primary job. It's the heart of our priestly vocation, and it's the most sublime element of priesthood. *But it requires that we unite our will to God's holy will.*
- And our uniting of our will to God's will, our offering of self as a sacrifice, flows directly from our offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For the Mass is not something *we* own; rather, it owns us.
- By making a sacrifice of self, offering to God not only the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass but offering as well as very selves, we are fashioned into living icons of Christ, in whose Person we stand.
- Some days this is easy as we experience the yoke of Christ as easy and His burdens light. Other times, we experience what Christ spoke to Peter on the shores of the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection, when He told Peter that a time will come when he will be led where he does not want to go.
- Yet, if we can bear those small deaths to self that come from uniting our will to God's, we begin to change. We begin think like Christ and to see things as He sees them. Our hearts get formed into the pattern of our Lord's own Sacred Heart.
- It is then that our priesthood becomes sublimely efficacious. It is then that we learn to look beyond the ugliness of human sinfulness to see that no one is beyond God's mercy, that God desires all men to be saved, and that God's grace is infinitely more powerful than any man's sinfulness.
- It is then that we realize the grace to be generous and humble enough to be God's instruments of grace, healing, and mercy. Of course, there are certainly days that are challenging and exhausting, and situations that seem impossible and beyond one's own capabilities to handle.
- There will be times when the people of God break your heart, and Providence appears as a cruel master.
- Yet, when we priests persevere in trying to do God's will, our Lord always steps in to do the heavy lifting. If we are generous with our time and willing to sacrifice for the people of God, then God never leaves us bereft of the graces necessary to accomplish what He asks.
- If we just say yes to God, He works through us, perfecting our charity and rendering it more effective.
- Indeed, charity is paramount for a priest, Fr. Templeton. We must love God vigorously and above all else, and we must love our fellow man as ourselves – bearing with other's faults and looking for the good in them, while also being mindful of one's own sins and weaknesses.
- Truly, the heart of a priest must be like our Lord's own Sacred Heart: humble, constantly open to all, burning with love, and willing to sacrifice for others.
- Indeed, Fr. Templeton, as Servant of God, Catherine Doherty, once wrote: "A priest is a lover of God, a priest is a lover of men, a priest is a holy man because he walks before the face of the All-Holy. A priest understands all things, a priest forgives all things, a priest encompasses all things. Nothing can be greater in this world than a priest. Nothing but God Himself."
- Trusting always in our Lord's divine mercy, may you learn well to unite your will to God's holy will, and thereby render glorious worship to Him. May our Trinitarian Lord bless you, Fr. Templeton, and may His Blessed Mother always keep you. *Ad multos annos!*