

## **The Most Holy Trinity 2020**

This weekend we had one man ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Tucson. Unfortunately, we have two retiring. And we almost lost one to death last week, but he is making a recovery. Keep praying for vocations.

It is common in today's world, especially in our country, to run into people who believe that all religions are basically the same. In fact, it is even becoming common to run into Catholics who have adopted this viewpoint. Many have this viewpoint because Vatican Council 2 mentioned that all religions have kernel of the truth, so they have blown it out of proportion. It is considered the tolerant, open-minded point of view. But in reality, it is just the opposite: it is the most close-minded and intolerant viewpoint someone could have in regards to religion.

Human nature is the same wherever we find human beings. And human nature always has the same basic needs and problems - biological, emotional and spiritual. And every religion tries to address those basic needs - for happiness and meaning, for example. And every religion tries to solve those basic problems - sin and forgiveness, and life after death, for example. In other words, all religions have to deal with the same basic human condition.

This is why some people try to claim that all religions are the same.

But the interesting thing is that different religions actually deal with those basic problems and needs in different ways. Atheistic religions say there is no god at all. Pantheistic religions say that everything in the universe is a part of god and identical to god; in other words, everything is God. Polytheistic

religions say that the divine realm is full of numerous, competing gods. Hinduism has 330 million gods. Monotheistic religions, like Christianity, believe in one, all-powerful, eternal God.

But the differences don't stop there. Inside each of those groups are different variations.

Each variation presents its own view about the nature of God, the nature of salvation and happiness, and how salvation can be found.

This is why it is a sign of close-mindedness or laziness to simply say that all religions are the same: it's a refusal to show any respect at all to what religious people really believe.

A prime example of this is the great mystery of Christian faith, which the whole Church throughout the world celebrates today in a special way, the Most Holy Trinity. Of the world's three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, only Christianity grasps the inner nature of God, that God is actually one in three: one divine nature, and three divine persons. Each of these three divine persons possesses the fullness of the divine nature, which is why we always pray in the name (singular) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and not in their names (plural). This is why we say in the Creed that the Son is "one in being with the Father, God from God, light from light," and that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son; with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified." The Catechism tells us that this is "the central mystery of Christian faith and life" (234). Jesus himself revealed it to us.

It seems like a contradiction - and that's what Jewish and Muslim theologians often tell us. How can the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each be

fully God, and yet distinct persons? True, this is hard to understand; our minds cannot grasp this completely. One reason is that in the word person in everyday usage indicates one thing and in theological language it means another. And yet, that very fact makes the doctrine of the Trinity ring true. It shows that no merely human mind would have been able to come up with it. And it also shows that God, the Creator of the universe, exists in a way that we, mere creatures, cannot fully understand - and that makes perfect sense: God should exceed our ability to understand him; if he didn't, he wouldn't be much of a God.

This is just one difference among many, but it makes the point: all religions are not the same, and to pretend that they are close-minded and disrespectful.

It is because we, as Christians, recognize that all religions do not offer the same explanations and solutions to the human condition that we, as Christians, are so firmly committed to religious freedom. The Catholic Church teaches that religious freedom, the freedom to believe, worship, and live in accordance with one's religious beliefs, is a basic human right. This is because a relationship with God is one of the most basic human needs and duties - it is as basic for the human mind and soul as food and water are for the human body. Christians defend this right not because we think all religions are equally true, but because we recognize that every human heart must be free to search for God without being forced.

If all religions were the same, then religious freedom would have no meaning. Religion itself, in fact, would have no meaning. It would be nothing more than a personal hobby, with no real truth or relevance for society. This is exactly what many

lawmakers these days are saying. They want to take religion out of social life and keep it behind closed doors. But that policy backfires: it makes atheism into the required public religion - violating the human right to religious liberty.

Of course, freedom of religion is not limitless. It's not the only human right.

No one has a right to use religion as an excuse for injustice. As Pope Benedict said in a meeting with leaders from different religions: "In a world wounded by conflicts, where violence is justified in God's name, it's important to repeat that religion can never become a vehicle of hatred, it can never be used in God's name to justify violence"

Because of the other basic rights, extremism in any religion is wrong. The Moslem or Hindu extremists that are killing Christians and burning or blowing up churches are in the wrong, because they are violating the right to life, as well as others rights.

All religions are not the same. They give different answers to life's biggest questions.

Today, as we profess our faith in the one, true God, the Most Holy Trinity, let's thank God for showing us the true answer to all those questions: Jesus Christ.

And let's renew our commitment to live as true Christians, so that those around us who are still looking for answers, will find Jesus Christ in us.