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MAY 27, 2018  
HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY  
ILC, WICHITA, KS  
JOHN 3: 16,17

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text which forms the basis for my message today is taken from the Gospel lesson for today. From John, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17 we read:

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world,<sup>[a]</sup> that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

Today, the first Sunday after Pentecost, churches all over the world celebrate Holy Trinity Sunday. Each year on Holy Trinity Sunday we search to understand and share this most precious doctrine of our faith -- that God is **“One in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity.”**

Today I would like to share with you, briefly, of the great God we have:

- Father, the Creator;
- Son, the Savior
- Holy Spirit, the sanctifier... the presence in our lives today.

In the past I have used variety of illustrations to help us with our understanding of the Holy Trinity.

I have used an:

- apple
- pyramid
- shamrock

But today... I would ask you to lift up your eyes... to gaze upon this beautiful wooden reredos surrounding the altar. Reredos is the liturgical name for a screen covering the back wall or surrounding an Altar.

Immanuel has a particularly beautiful reredos. It is filled with symbolism to help us grow and understand the beauties of our Christian faith.

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I also asked George to take a picture of the center wooden panels of the reredos... and we have used that as the logo for the front cover of our worship bulletin.

For in the reredos... we see symbols to help us grow in our appreciation and love for the Trinity... God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Let's begin

### I. **God the Father....**

If you look at the top of the reredos... the 2<sup>nd</sup> top panel has something that looks like the tip of a spear...with a carved image below.

I did not know what this represented. I couldn't find in any of our descriptions of the reredos or any of Pastor Deffner's notes... what this might represent. Pastor Louis H Deffner was pastor of Immanuel from 1922-1966. He built this beautiful parish. Those of you who knew Pastor Deffner knew that he was a meticulous man. There was nothing done or designed that was by accident.

Since I couldn't find any record of what this spear might represent... I contacted several friends of mine who are liturgical architecture experts.

They told me that based upon the design of the reredos... that in their opinion they felt that this part of the reredos was designed to represent ...

### **God the Father.**

The shape on the tip of the reredos looks like a spear. However, they felt that spear is actually to represent a scepter... the object a King holds up as a symbol of his authority.

Although we believe that the entire Trinity was active in the creation of the world and everything in the world... according to the Catechism ... we attribute the work of Creation to **God the Father.**

The scepter is to symbolize God the Father's authority and His power in our world. As God the Father is credited with Creation... the Scriptures also tell us that the crowning point of Creation is... humanity.

When God created Adam and Eve he placed them in a perfect world. That perfect world was called the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve that they could do anything they wanted ...

- they could play with the animals,
- they could sleep to 2 o'clock every afternoon,
- and they could play video games on their cell phones all day and all night ... long.

But there was one item they were not to touch. That was the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. For then they would die. Now, into this picture enters .... evil.

Evil takes on the form of Satan. Satan was a former angel of God, who tried to take control away from God and Satan was cast out of heaven. Satan is so humiliated... that he is not more powerful than God.... that he decides to go after the pinnacle of God's creation – Adam and Eve.

Satan tempts Adam and Eve to sin – they *surrender* to this temptation. With sin the perfect oneness between God and humanity is destroyed.

## **II. Ahhh! But God does not give up on us!**

**Remember that we are the most loved item of all creation.**

**God gives a promise to Adam and Eve.** God promises Adam and Eve that He will send a Savior who will crush the head of Satan. This promised Savior is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ.

If you look at the very center top of the reredos... you will see an image of a Cross.

The Cross is the symbol of the Christian faith.

For as we look at the Cross... we recall that Jesus Christ came to our world for one purpose. That is to take our sins upon himself. Through Christ's suffering and death on the Cross Jesus has redeemed us from our sins. By Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday He shows us that one day we too will rise from the dead, and just as Christ ascended into heaven... so one day we also will be taken to heaven to live forever.

## **III. Which then brings us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Holy Trinity.**

From the Old Testament reading last Sunday, from Ezekiel 37:9 we read:

<sup>9</sup> Then he (God) said to me (Ezekiel) , "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"

The symbol of the Holy Spirit on the reredos are the panel with the tip on them with 4 cloud shaped symbols to represent God the Holy Spirit. The breath and the wind of the Holy Spirit

To God the Holy Spirit we attribute the work of ... faith. We believe that it is through the power ... through the breath... through the wind... of the Holy Spirit that we are brought to faith in Jesus Christ.

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And, we also believe that the Holy Spirit works -- sanctification -- in us. That is... the Holy Spirit helps us be more -- saint like -- again, that is the Holy Spirit of God hears our prayers and gives us the strength we need to say no to sin... and walk with the Lord.

### **Conclusion:**

My friends, we are very blessed. For in addition to the blessings of our faith... with the Triune God... we at Immanuel have the extra blessing of worshipping in a nave and sanctuary surrounded by beauty.

As you come to communion... whenever you come to the church... lift up your eyes to gaze at the reredos... and be reminded that we have a Triune God... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...who walks with us every moment of our earthly lives... and is here to bless us. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.