

Holy Trinity Sunday
June 19, 2011
Peace Lutheran Church
Belgrade, Montana

This Holy Trinity Sunday, in which we celebrate a Christian Doctrine that became crystal clear in the Fourth Century, it is the Trinity of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Christian Doctrinal Confession of the **Trinity of God** is a fundamental article of our faith.

The First Article of the Augsburg Confession's **Articles of Faith and Doctrine** written in 1530 is **GOD** in which we find this:

We unanimously hold and teach in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. All three are one divine essence, eternal, without division, without end, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, one creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible. The word "person" is to be understood as the Fathers employed the term in this connection, not as a part or a property of another but as that which exists of itself.

Then the First Article of the Augsburg Confession goes on to name some of the heresies that are contrary to it.

The Smalcald Articles, written in 1537 by Dr. Martin Luther, Luther was very ill at this time and thought that he might die soon, so the Smalcald Articles were written perhaps as the last chance to sum up his beliefs.

In later years people began looking at the Smalcald Articles as a witness to what genuine Lutheranism looks like.

In Part I Luther writes:

The first part of the Articles treats the sublime articles of divine majesty, namely:

1) That the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature, are one God, who created heaven and earth, etc.

2) That the Father was begotten by no one, the Son was begotten by the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

3) That only the Son became man, and neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit.

4) That the Son became in this manner: he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, without the cooperation of man, and was born of the pure, holy, and Virgin Mary. Afterwards he suffered, died, was buried, descended to hell, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven; and he is seated at the right hand of God, will come to judge the living and the dead, etc., as the Apostles' Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Catechism in common use for children teach. These articles are not matters of dispute or contention, for both parties confess them. Therefore, it is not necessary to treat them at greater length.

In the Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church published in 1965 is a three page article on the **Trinity**.

The final paragraph of these three pages states:

*In the doctrine of the essential Trinity theology reaches the limits of its ability to speak. Here theology turns to adoration. But the crowning apex of worship is not the wordless devotion of a mystic who seeks to submerge himself into God's eternal essence, but a hymn of praise to the triune God. ... The ultimate expression of such devotion and the highest possible theological assertion on the subject of the Trinity is the Athanasian Creed and – the **Gloria in Excelsis** of Christian Worship.*

The Athanasian Creed is long and thus seldom used, but perhaps it would be fitting on this Holy Trinity Sunday to hear parts of it.

*We worship one God in trinity
And the Trinity in unity,
Neither confusing the persons
Nor dividing the divine being.*

*For the Father is one person,
The Son is another,
And the Spirit is still another.*

*But the deity of the Father, Son,
And the Holy Spirit
Is one, equal in glory,
Coeternal in majesty.*

*What the Father is,
The Son is,
And so is the Holy Spirit.*

*Uncreated is the Father;
Uncreated is the Son;
Uncreated is the Spirit.*

*The Father is infinite;
The Son is infinite;
The Holy Spirit is infinite.*

*Eternal is the Father;
Eternal is the Son;
Eternal is the Spirit:*

*And yet there are not
Three eternal beings,
But one who is eternal;*

As there are not

*Three uncreated and unlimited beings,
But one who is uncreated
And unlimited.*

*Almighty is the Father
Almighty is the Son
Almighty is the Spirit:*

*And yet there are not
Three almighty beings
But one who is almighty.*

*Thus the Father is God;
The Son is God;
And the Holy Spirit is God.*

*And yet there are not three gods,
But one God.*

*Thus the Father is Lord
The Son is Lord
The Holy Spirit is Lord:*

*And yet there are not three Lords,
But one Lord.*

...

*And in this Trinity,
No one is before or after,
Greater or less than the other;*

*But all three persons are in themselves,
Coeternal and coequal;
And so we must worship
The Trinity in unity
And the one God in three persons.*

...

And on goes the Athanasian Creed, faithful to its proclamation of the Trinity of God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Please turn to page 139 in the front of the hymnal. I want us to sing the **Gloria in Excelsis**.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Paul Tillich writes in Volume Three of Systematic Theology:

*The doctrine of the Trinity is not closed. ... It must be kept open in order to fulfill its original function – **to express in embracing symbols the self-manifestation of the Divine Life to man.***

II Corinthians 13:13; The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Mathew 28:19; Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Amen.