

## Homily for Trinity Sunday, 2022—

Sometimes, people ask me: “So, what is your favorite part of being a deacon?” Well, first, it would be participating in Masses and other liturgies here. But a close runner-up would be my ministry at prisons and jails where I provide pastoral counseling to the men and where I lead liturgies with Scriptures, prayers, preaching, music, and Holy Communion with hosts consecrated at an earlier Mass.

But there’s also another close runner-up —and it’s greatly different in setting and spirit from the prison one. This other favorite deacon ministry is—Baptisms, which I did a lot of when I led parishes.

Now, there is a small green book that priests and deacons use for the Rite of Baptism. It has everything all spelled out in there—all the readings and prayers.

On the last page of my own copy, I have this written: “Margaret Flanagan, July 1, 2007.”

Margaret was the first baby I ever baptized. She was a tiny Irish girl with bright, blue eyes. And I have to say: Irish girls keep coloring my life.

My mother was one—100-percent Irish. And then, miraculously, for my first Baptism, I baptized an Irish girl. Little Margaret, I should add, was very well behaved. She didn’t cry. I was all emotional. But she was calm and quiet.

Of course, Baptisms are typically joyous occasions.

They are times of tremendous possibility and hope—even more so, I think, than weddings. At a wedding, sometimes, it can be so much about the dress and the cake.

But at a Baptism, it’s all about the baby and the sacrament—about a new life being welcomed into God’s church—God’s family.

And there is something very particular—very specific—about the Baptism ritual. It is actually in the words that are spoken. We call them—are you ready for this?—the Trinitarian Formula.

Which is: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” It’s not considered a valid baptism unless these words are used.

When people come to us wanting to become Catholic Christians, one of the first things we need to check is if that person were baptized, and how. If the Trinity Formula words were not a part of their ritual, the Catholic Church does not recognize those baptisms.

On this Trinity Sunday, if you want a reminder of how important the Trinity is, THAT is it. From the very beginning of our lives as Christians, we are sealed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Without these words, there’s no sacrament. They signify the extraordinary importance the Church places on this unique belief, this one great dogma: one God, in three persons.

It all comes down to Trinity.

That is one of the reasons we celebrate this glorious feast, one week after Pentecost. The Trinity has been revealed to a waiting world, Father, Son, and Spirit, and we mark this great gift now.

You may have noticed that the words in today’s second Scripture are very familiar.

From that letter from Paul, we get the words the priest uses at the beginning of Mass. He invokes the Trinity in a beautiful and meaningful way—Christ’s grace, God’s love, and the Holy Spirit’s fellowship.

He offers it to us, and we proclaim it back to him.

But that’s not the first time we have mentioned the Trinity at this Mass. Today, our Mass began with something that most of us probably take for granted, and hardly think about—we do it so often. It is—The Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It’s not just a gesture we use to punctuate prayer. It’s not just a sign of our Catholic Christianity.

**It is a—re-statement—of our Baptism.**

**Those long-ago words I said over that tiny baby, Margaret Flanagan...the words a priest or deacon said over each of us as water was poured over our heads...the first words that made us members of the Body of Christ—these words we speak again whenever we say The Sign of the Cross, and, in effect, we're re-Christening ourselves, right?**

**We brand ourselves with God in his three persons.**

**And whatever we do or say after that is in the name of the Father...and of the Son...and of the Holy Spirit.**

**We become ICONS of the Blessed Trinity. What an incredible gift. What an incredible responsibility. Just think of what that simple gesture means. We touch our heads for the Father—the one whose beautiful idea, whose auspicious thought—created us. This is where we began—in the mind of God.**

**We touch our hearts for the Son—the one whose unceasing love took him to the Cross, and the one who taught us, as well, *how* to love through his own Sacred Heart.**

**We touch our shoulders for the Holy Spirit—the one who gives us strength, and who carries us on his shoulders—on his wings if you will—and who enables us to be God's arms and feet and vocal chords, working on earth.**

**When we make the Sign of the Cross, and pray the Sign of the Cross with those words, we make of ourselves an offering—and a prayer.**

**We embody what the Trinity represents. And we seek to bring that more consciously into our lives and into our actions with all the people we meet. We do it in the name of God—all that he is—all that he does.**

**We do it in the name of the Trinity.**

**Near the end of the Baptism ritual, there is a beautiful moment when the parents receive a lit candle. The priest or deacon says to them: "Receive the light of Christ."**

**Thinking about that moment, I'm reminded this Sunday of something the great preacher, Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen, once said about the Trinity. He explained it this way: "It's like three candles, giving off one light."**

**You and I can pray to live in that light—to always be drawn to it, and to always strive to give it to others—all In the name of the one God—in three persons.**

**Plz—give it some thought. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**