

Trinity Sunday, 2024—

People occasionally ask me: “What is your favorite part of being a deacon?” Well, first, I think, would be leading Catholic church wedding services and marrying engaged couples. In my nearly 20 years of being a deacon, I have married more than 25 couples, and each wedding sacramental preparation, each service, and each aftermath have been incredibly joyful and holy.

My second favorite thing is...baptisms. There is a small, green book deacons and priests use for the Rite of Baptism.

It has everything spelled out in there—all the readings—all the prayers. On the last page of my own copy, I have written this information: “Margaret Murray, July 1, 2007.” She was the first baby I ever baptized. A little, red-haired Irish girl.

I don’t know why, but Irish lasses keep coloring my life. My mother was...100-percent Irish. That’s what she used to say.

But, then, miraculously, for my first baptism, I baptized a lass. Little Margaret, I should add, was very well-behaved.

She didn’t cry. I was teared up. But SHE was calm.

Baptisms are also typically joyous occasions. It’s a day of tremendous possibility—a day of hope—maybe even more so, I think, than weddings. At a wedding, there can often be a huge emphasis on the dress and the cake.

But at a baptism, it’s all about the baby. A new life is being welcomed into God’s church.

And there is something very particular, very specific, about the baptism ritual.

It is in the words that are spoken. We call them the Trinitarian Formula. And that formula 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 those exact words are used.

When people come to us asking to become Catholic, one of the first things we need to check is if that person is baptized. If those words were not a part of the 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 those words, it doesn't count. It signifies the profound importance the Church places on this unique belief—this one great dogma: one God, in three persons.

Truly, 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 as Father, Son, AND Spirit, and we are marking this great gift.

You may have noticed the words in today's second Scripture are very familiar. They are the words the priest says at the beginning of every Mass. Saying those words, the priest invokes the Trinity in a beautiful and meaningful way.

For example, he refers to Jesus' grace, the Father's love, and the Holy Spirit's fellowship.

At we affirm them at every Mass, too. We say in response to the priest's words: "And also with you.

But that's not the first time we heard the Trinity mentioned in our Mass today. However, when we heard it, we may have taken it for granted because we do it so often. It's... 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.

And it's not just a sign of our Catholicity. It is actually a re-statement of our baptism.

The words I said over little Margaret Murray...the same words a priest or a deacon said over each of us as water was poured over our heads... these words make us members of the Body of Jesus. And every time we say those words in prayer, we are—
in effect—re-Christening ourselves. We are branding ourselves with God in his three persons.

And when we do that, we become personal icons of the Blessed Trinity.

And what an incredible gift that is, isn't it? It is also an incredible responsibility.

Just think about what that simple gesture means. We touch our heads for the Father—the one whose mere idea, whose loving thought, created us. This is where we began, in the mind of God.

Then, we touch our hearts for the Son—the one whose unceasing love took him to the cross, and the one who also taught us *how* to love through his own Sacred Heart.

Then, 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, working on earth.

When we make the Sign of the Cross, and pray the Sign of the Cross, we make of ourselves an offering—and a prayer. We embody what the Trinity represents. And we seek to bring that—with our lives and with our actions—to all those we meet.

We do it in the name of God—all that he is, and 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 lighted candle. The deacon or priest says to them: "Receive the light of Christ."

Thinking about that moment, I'm reminded this weekend of something the great preacher, John Wesley, once said about the Trinity.

He explained it this way: The Trinity is as three candles, giving off...one light.

We can pray right now to live in that light, can't we—to always be drawn to it—to always strive to give it to others. And we can do that...in the name of the one God in three persons. We can do that...In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Plz give it some thought....