Reading 1 Proverbs 8: 22-31

Thus says the wisdom of God: "The LORD possessed me, the beginning of his ways, the forerunner of his prodigies of long ago; from of old I was poured forth, at the first, before the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains or springs of water; before the mountains were settled into place, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet the earth and fields were not made, nor the first clods of the world.

"When the Lord established the heavens I was there, when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep; when he made firm the skies above, when he fixed fast the foundations of the earth; when he set for the sea its limit, so that the waters should not transgress his command; then was I beside him as his craftsman, and I was his delight day by day, playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of his earth; and I found delight in the human race."

Reading 2 Romans 5:1-5

Brothers and sisters: Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Gospel John 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

HOMILY

Those who have watched children grow up from infancy can be excited to see how the youngsters go from mother’s milk or formula, to mushy fruits and vegetables, to more substantial food and finally to what adults eat. My wife and I have watched that progression years ago with our own children, and, more recently, we see it again with our grandchildren. The progression is especially in our sights now as Barb cares for our granddaughter, Emmeline, a few days each week. We especially enjoy the reaction when we eat something in front of little Emme, now 7 months old, and watch her put her lips together and do that “mmm mmmm” thing. But, we know that she’s barely at the stage of eating that mushy stuff now, and many months away from the food we’re eating. Physically, she’s not ready for it yet … even though she may not know it, we do. Although she’s too young to know it now, there’s the beginning of an element of trust in there. Hang on to that thought for a few minutes.

In today’s Responsorial Psalm, we heard, “If today you hear God’s voice, harden not your hearts.” God’s voice, the Spirit of Truth. And then, in today’s Gospel passage, we hear again about the Spirit of Truth. In that passage, we are approaching the end of what’s often called Jesus’ Farewell Discourse, 4
chapters in John where Jesus was sitting at the Last Supper meal with His 11 close disciples – Judas had already left the table. We have heard portions of the Last Discourse this year during several weeks between Easter and Pentecost. We heard about Jesus preparing His disciples for the next several days and what was about to happen to Him, as well as giving them other information that would carry them through until after the Resurrection and even beyond that. But He didn’t want to give them more information than they could handle, nor more than they could understand. After 3 years of being with Jesus and getting to know Him much better, the disciples were probably aghast at the idea of Him leaving them – after all, they had stayed with Him after all the others left, especially including the multitude who left when Jesus told them that He is the Bread of Life which they needed to consume for everlasting life. So, John recorded several questions and comments from them during the Farewell Discourse including, “where are you going?” … “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” … “Lord, show us the father.” It was all mysterious, it was all confusing to them, and they didn’t understand. Of special importance in the reading that we heard today was Jesus’ need to let them know that the Holy Spirit would always be with them after He left them, to guide them, to help them understand what they needed to understand … when the appropriate time came for them to understand. And, Jesus told them that this Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who will speak the same truth as Jesus, who speaks the same truth as the Father – all three speak the same truth. Shortly afterwards, Jesus explained His statements a little more, and they finally responded, nearer the end of the discourse, “Now you are talking plainly, and not in any figure of speech. Now we realize that you know everything and that you do not need to have anyone question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God.” The disciples replaced at least some of their fear and anxiety with trust, trust in Jesus and trust in what He said. In effect, He would not be leaving them alone – with the Spirit of Truth, He would still be with them. They were to trust in the Spirit of Truth.

This weekend, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, a Church doctrine which almost all Christian faith communities share with Catholics. The Gospel passage we heard was selected by the Church for this feast because it incorporates the mystery of the Trinity. Now, if you ask any other person sitting in the pew with you what the Trinity means, I think most would answer: well, three Persons in one God, or Godhead. But, go a step further and ask what that means, and you may get a variety of answers, which might show what each Person of the Trinity does – for example, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier – but that doesn’t really answer the question, does it. Many have tried to understand and/or teach the Trinity in a variety of ways. Most of us probably know that St. Patrick is said to have used a 3-leafed clover on one plant to try and explain the concept just a little further. Stephanie, and all of you budding musicians out there, might enjoy knowing that St. Ignatius explained the Trinity as a musical chord – 3 notes played together, each contributing a significant part of the whole sound. Some saw an analogy to the Divine Persons in the Lion King characters. And those of you who read the Shack were treated to a rather unique view of the Trinity in the characters of the book. Well, each of these might help just a bit more, but we still realize that a lot more is missing, don’t we. Through Scripture and Tradition (big T), we know that the Trinity is especially about relationship, about sharing, about love and charity, and about many other characteristics. We try to put human terms and meanings into something like this, and realize that there’s more, much more. What we know has been revealed over time, by the
Spirit of Truth, the Spirit who knows where we are at and what we can handle, how much we can bear. Let’s look at this gradual process another way. Think about an acquaintance you barely know, and how much you know about that person, but how much you really don’t know. Now, move on to someone who is near and dear to you, a friend, relative, spouse, someone you really think you know quite well – but, think again, and how much is still missing from the complete picture. Now, here is a real challenge – how well do we really know ourselves? Each of us probably learns more about our self each day of our life – at a time and place when we might need to know. Jesus told His disciples that they couldn’t bear all that he could tell them. For Jews in the 1st century during Christ’s time on earth, trying to explain the Trinity, and all involved in that explanation, would have been much more than they could have understood, while risking the charge of blasphemy. Over time, the Church, guided by the Spirit of Truth, developed the doctrine that we celebrate today. We trust that the doctrine was inspired by the Spirit of Truth.

Going back to little Emmeline and her progression through the stages of food and nourishment, we see a case where the physical aspect of development has set the limits of what she can handle at this point in time. We know what will happen if we rush that physical development. But, how about emotional development? Can you think of examples in today’s culture where children, and even adults, are often exposed to something that they aren’t ready for at their stage of emotional development at the time? As one example, anxiety and depression are becoming increasingly common among youngsters under 10 years old – children who are exposed to horrific videos and games on a daily basis with their friends and even strangers on-line – children who are on Xanax and other medications to help relieve their emotional issues. And, what about the effects on young minds from classroom demonstrations by Planned Parenthood and similar organizations? We need to pray for the Spirit of Truth to help us with our societal issues and ills. My wife and I used to stand in front of the TV if we saw a scene coming up that wasn’t appropriate for the youngsters to watch, or we turned the channel to another show if it wasn’t appropriate for even us to see. Our “kids” still laugh at that form of censorship, but appreciated it. Today, it would be impossible to stand in front of a computer monitor or I-pad as a form of censorship, wouldn’t it.

Mental development? That’s an easy one to understand what happens from a complete over-challenge. Try teaching advanced calculus to a typical 6-year old, or even handing him or her the car keys for a “ride around the block.”

Physical, emotional, mental developments – all take time. What about spiritual development? Consider that no two of us are at the same point of our faith journey at the same time. But, that shouldn’t keep us from moving forward, guided by prayer and the Spirit of Truth, and encouraging the same for others we love. Our spiritual development needs to grow just as our physical, mental and emotional developments. … The Spirit of Truth also guides the Church in moving forward, making changes in its tradition (small t), such as the changes that have been implemented as a result of Vatican II. Some may feel that the Church is moving too slow in implementing further changes that we feel should be the norm. If it’s something that might be changeable in the future, but hasn’t gotten there yet, then maybe we are not ready for it – or maybe we will never be ready. It’s a matter of trust, isn’t it. We need to believe that the Church is still guided by the Spirit of Truth, just as it was in those early days, and has been for the past 2000 years.
In summary, please consider the following:

1) Please look at your Catechism, and maybe another Catholic book or two about the Holy Trinity – challenge yourself to learn one more thing that you didn’t know beforehand about the Trinity

2) Likewise, review the words of the Profession of Faith, which we will say in just a minute or two, with the aid of the Catechism. Try to understand how the tenets of our faith were developed, and when.

3) Pray to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, for guidance in your own life, for the decisions you need to make in your life, and for Church and societal guidance.

4) And, finally, trust in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth that speaks for each Person of the Holy Trinity, to guide the Church, and to guide each of us, in our daily life, when we ask for that help.

There is no end to God’s Revelation, in our selves, in our world, and in our faith. Trust in the Spirit of Truth, as Jesus’ disciples trusted in Him.