



BECOME A LIVING TRINITY HOUSE

The Domestic Church and “Trinity House”

“Domestic church”: we have heard the phrase for a long while now. And that is a beautiful phrase, because actually it speaks about the reality of the Christian family: the smallest visible expression of the Church. There is an awful lot of meaning packed into these two words: “domestic church.” It tells us first of all what the Church is. For that, we need to step back a moment and go even further—into one of the most basic of our Christian mysteries of faith: the Holy Trinity. We profess there is one God, and yet within the one God, there is a community of persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—each of whom is united with the other two by a unique bond of love. And so, the Holy Trinity is a community of love, and it is the model for our human community. Therefore, the Church finds its deepest expression in this kind of community of love, for as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are united in these bonds of love, so the members of the Church, with Christ the Head, are likewise bonded through love; the love of the Trinity, uniting us through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to give praise to the Father.

A Living Family that Models the Trinity: Welcoming, Listening, Serving

We can say then that the “domestic church” is one that finds its deepest model in the Trinity. Here at Trinity House, the family is often called the “Trinity House,” not meaning the physical place here, but a *living* Trinity House, a living family that models the Trinity. This is a wonderful expression, and Soren and Ever have enabled us to understand that, as a living Trinity House, the family is marked by the aspects of *welcoming, listening* and *servicing*.

As a living Trinity House, the family is marked by the aspects of welcoming, listening and serving.

God the Father is welcoming us to the table, His table, the table of His Word and of the Eucharist. God the Holy Spirit is listening to our pleas, our prayers, the groans of our hearts; not only listening, but also advocating for us before the Father, in union with Jesus, who is also another intercessor. God the Son is serving us—first of all, by His dying and rising, the paschal mystery, that makes

On the vigil of Christ the King Sunday, Nov. 21, 2020, Bishop Emeritus Paul Loverde came to Trinity House Café and shared an Advent meditation via livestream (and transcribed here) with friends of Trinity House Community. His inspiring and encouraging reflection offers concrete suggestions for making a “new beginning” this Advent!



possible our salvation. He also serves us by giving us all the sacraments, but especially the sacrament of the Eucharist, where we are fed with Jesus Himself, His real presence under signs of food and drink, to strengthen us as we witness.

If the family looks at God as God the Father welcoming, and God the Holy Spirit listening to us, and God the Son serving us, then, in turn, if we are modeled after the Trinity, we must reach out in welcome, in the ability to listen attentively, and in serving. Welcoming, listening and serving—first of all, within the family, but then, as family, beyond.

Imagine what that means within the family if, with the help of God—of course, not solely on our own ability, but that ability transformed by God’s grace—we can learn to welcome each other! To welcome each other in terms of our being understanding and patient; welcoming each other in terms of accepting our weaknesses, our quirks; and in turn, as family, listening to each other—listening with the heart. That makes a difference. You listen with the heart. What is that person *really* saying? Sometimes we use words, and they are not really what we are saying. We are saying something different. We have to listen carefully with the heart. We then, as family, serve one another, helping one another, in the ways I have explained; and then, beyond the family, reaching out to others, again, with that spirit of welcoming, listening and serving.

The Family: The Soil of Vocations and of the Sacrament of Matrimony

Moreover, as the domestic church, we realize that it is the family that is the soil of future vocations: a future calling to sons within that family to be priests, if God so wills that; or both the sons and daughters to be religious

brothers and sisters, if God so wills that; and later on, when some of those sons marry and grow up, perhaps they'll be invited to become permanent deacons. But the family is not only the seed of those vocations; in a certain sense, it is the seed of another vocation—of another sacrament called matrimony. Marriage preparation begins in the family, not later on when you go to school. In the family! That is where we learn how to be with each other in friendliness, support, growing in all the virtues needed to have a worthwhile relationship of husband, wife, father, mother, children. Yes, see how important the family is! Yet the family today is in great trouble. There are so many things in the culture that weaken and devalue the family, so we must work to strengthen our families and to strengthen people to enter into solid families in the future.

This Advent: New Beginnings, New Inroads to Becoming a Living Trinity House

Advent is a season of hope, because Advent reminds us that what we long for and hope for: in one sense, it is already come; and that is the person of Jesus Christ. But in Advent, we actually recall three comings of the Lord Jesus. We look back and remember His historical coming, when He was born into our human family, with his human nature, on Christmas day. That's the first coming. We also recall that at the end of life, and again at the end of the world, there will be another coming of Christ. When our life ends, He comes to greet us, and hopefully, if we've tried to be faithful, to lead us to eternal life. At the end of the world, we shall all be judged, and please God, again through His divine mercy, all be admitted to eternal life, forever and ever. But in between the first coming and the final coming, there is a third coming: *every day*. The Lord comes every day in many ways to us. He comes to us when we pray. He comes to us when we receive the sacraments. He comes to us in creation. He comes to us in one another in the family, in the parish.

Yes, there is time in Advent for the family to reap new beginnings, make new inroads...living in joyful hope for the gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

This season of hope, Advent, reminds us of these three comings. I would suggest that as we look forward to this new season, that as family, we would seek to more concretely make this a season of hope, of expectation—not so much of gifts, although gifts are fine. You see, the real gifts are not material gifts. The real gifts we have are the gifts that are immaterial: our love, our presence with one another. We can make that more real as we also remember the gift God gave us in His Son. So how about getting an Advent wreath, or taking the wreath you have from the attic, and getting some new candles, and using

it for all four weeks of Advent? As you light the candle, offer a prayer, not rushed, but with some time. And take some time, maybe around the table, to discuss what the meaning of this advent wreath is.

Or perhaps we take some time—I know we can be very busy, we can be distracted—each week, 10 or 15 minutes, to use the readings for the following Sunday. As we look at the three readings, we would see in the Old Testament reading how God is preparing for the coming of the Redeemer. God is preparing so that we may be welcomed by Jesus into salvation, into the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. We would see also in the readings how the Holy Spirit is listening now to our prayers as He draws us closer to Jesus, whose birth we shall liturgically recall at Christmas, and as He comes every day to us. And we can also see in these readings during Advent how the Son serves us. We do not hear a lot about the dying and rising of Jesus in Advent as such, but Jesus came precisely to save us. And so, Christmas leads us to the dying on the cross and rising to new life. In Christmas, we see the infant welcoming us to His love that He will make even more graphic by dying and rising—and will make available to us in every Eucharist.

Yes, there is time in Advent, for the family to reap new beginnings, make new inroads, so that the family can become what it is called to be—this domestic church. It can become an expression even more of the presence of the Trinity. The family can become a living Trinity House: welcoming, listening, serving; being grateful for the gifts given, and living in joyful hope for the gifts God will give us, especially the gift of one another in the family, and the gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. In closing, I wish each of you a blessed, happy hope-filled Advent—Advent that rejoices your heart with true hope, enduring hope, because the hope is a person, whose name is Jesus. Thank you and God bless you!

