

Homily for May 30, 2010 (Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity)
Proverbs 8:22-31; Psalm 8 (v.v.); Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

Got Your GPS?

As a frequent traveler, I spend a fair amount of time in rental cars. In the old days (i.e., until a few years ago) the counter attendants would often ask if I needed a map. Today they are very likely to offer a different option: a GPS device. GPS, of course, stands for Global Positioning Satellite.

It's a pretty amazing technology. If you are "directionally challenged," have trouble reading maps, or don't trust the "turn by turn" instructions provided by some online services, then GPS is for you....

...or maybe not. Like any technology, from cell phones to the ABS (Antilock Brake System) on your car, GPS devices aren't perfect. They can't overcome user error or unforeseen environmental conditions.

In order for the GPS to work in a rental car, you must at least know: (1) where you are; and (2) where you're going. If you put in the wrong information, you will go in the wrong direction; and if you don't follow directions, you will often end up in the wrong place.

In the biblical readings designated for today's Mass, the Church asks us whether we have our GPS: *God's Purpose and Spirit*. This demands that we know and have three things:

- Where We're At (Self-Awareness)
- Where We're Going (Self-Determination)
- How We're Going to Get There (Self-Discipline)

To know God's purpose for us and to allow God's Spirit to work through us, we need to know who God is dealing with—our strengths, our weaknesses, who we are, and *whose* we are. In our first reading from Proverbs 8, we see a glimmer of divine self-awareness as "the wisdom of God" describes her primordial relationship with God: "I was beside him as his craftsman, and I was his delight day by day" (v. 30). Wisdom is the first of God's works and has been with God since the dawn of creation.

Wisdom is described here as female. Indeed, the major biblical languages all speak of wisdom in the feminine, as *Sophia* (Greek) and *Hokmah* (Hebrew). Even the Latin word for wisdom, *Sapientia*, is feminine. Because we are so familiar with male images and terms for God (Father, Son, King, Lord, etc.) we can forget that God both encompasses all genders and is beyond gender.

Through the grace of revelation, we can come to know God; but we also realize that God's ways are also beyond our understanding. As the psalmist so poignantly reflected (Ps. 8:4-5):

*When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars which you set in place—
what is man that you should be mindful of him,
or the son of man that you should care for him?*

Today our liturgical calendar calls us to reflect on the Most Holy Trinity—the mystery of God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In our gospel reading from John 16, Jesus explicitly notes each person of the Trinity and he also notes something that is especially important for us to remember: that God’s very nature is to be in relationship and that the Trinity is a *communion* of persons.

We can easily lose that basic understanding when we consider the references to the Trinity in the more formal and dogmatic language of the Church. It may be hard to wrap our minds around what we mean when we say in what is popularly known as the Nicene Creed that Jesus is “eternally begotten of the Father” or that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son.”

We should, of course, know the Creed and its significance in the life of our Church. However, we cannot lose the fact that not only is it in God’s nature to be in relationship but even more importantly, God wants to be in relationship *with us!* We call the state of ultimate fulfillment of that relationship heaven or eternal life. God also wants that relationship to be rooted in freedom and self-determination.

In our gospel reading, Jesus described his relationship with the Father and the Spirit that would glorify him and guide his disciples “to all truth.” We cannot forget that he did so at the Last Supper, as he was freely choosing to give his life for us. As he earlier told his disciples as the Good Shepherd (John 10:17-18):

This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father.

Here Jesus also reveals something else that often gets lost in our sometimes exaggerated American notions of independence: we can be free *and* obedient at the same time! In fact, by fulfilling God’s purpose and being obedient to the Holy Spirit, we are as free as we can be because we are not locked into a battle of wills with God or risking eternal alienation from God—a battle we cannot win and a loss that is horrible to contemplate.

Our journey of obedience is rooted in self-discipline and nourished by hope. In our second reading from Romans 5, St. Paul instructs us that hope is produced by affliction, endurance and proven character. We’ve all got troubles and trials. Sometimes we think that God is testing us; but it’s not God, it is *life* that tests us.

We can endure the affliction; we can pass the test; and we can complete the journey...if we have our GPS. May we fulfill God’s purpose and allow God to direct our lives—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. +