

THE DIVINE FLOW

John 16:12-15

There is a wonderful book in our children's library entitled 3 in 1. It uses an apple to illustrate the teaching of the Trinity. I am going to use that idea to review the Church's teaching about God being three in one.

Look at a single apple. Now think that there is only one God. If I cut open an apple, it has three parts—the peel, the flesh, and the core. The one true God has three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

All three parts of the apple are apple. The peel is apple. It is not an orange. The flesh is apple. It is not a pear. It is not a plum. The core is apple. It is not a grapefruit. It is not a watermelon. But these three—peel, flesh, core—are not three apples, but just one apple. All three persons of the one true God are God. God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Holy Spirit is God. But these three—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—are not three Gods, but just one God.

The three different parts of the apple have different purposes. The peel protects. It keeps the apple healthy. The flesh of the apple is good to eat. Lots of good things to eat are made from the flesh of the apple—apple pie, apple crisp, applesauce, apple cider. The core of the apple contains seeds from which apple trees grow. When just one apple seed is planted in the ground, the result is many, many apples.

Like the apple the three persons of the one true God have different purposes too—God the Father is our protector. He made us and all people and all things, even apples. He loves us and protects us and makes even bad things turn out for our good. He keeps things growing so we have food—cows, carrots, even apples. We do things God doesn't like. We don't do what He wants us to do. God said there must be a punishment for these things. That would make us very sad. It would hurt a lot for a very long time.

But God sent His Son to take the punishment for us. His name is Jesus. He is a real man. He suffered, died, and was buried like an apple seed is buried in the ground. But just as an apple seed sprouts from the ground and makes a new apple, Jesus rose from the dead. The result is beautiful, wonderful, happy new lives for us.

But before we can have this, there is something else we must have—faith in Jesus.

When you plant an apple seed in the ground you believe an apple will grow from it. That's faith in an apple seed. When you believe Jesus died for you and lives again to give you a beautiful, wonderful, happy new life, that's faith in Jesus. Our hearts are like a piece of ground. The ground cannot plant itself with an apple seed. Someone must put the seed into the ground.

We cannot put faith into our own hearts. God the Holy Spirit makes us believe in Jesus. He puts faith into our hearts and keeps it alive and growing as long as we want him to.

When an apple seed is planted in the ground, the rain feeds it, and it begins to grow. When the Holy Spirit puts faith into the heart, he feeds it with God's Word, and faith begins to grow. When you pick an apple from a tree, you know it is an apple. It looks like an apple, it has an apple peel, its flesh is apple, and if you plant a seed from its core, an apple tree will grow. Though it has three parts, you know you do not have three apples, just one. If you have faith in the true God, you believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There are three persons, but there is only one true God. . .

The Trinity—we name churches after it. More LCMS churches are named Trinity than any other name. We begin our worship in the name of the Triune God. We make so many designs in our churches based on the Trinity. But so what? What does the Triune God have to do with you and me?

Jesus says in our Gospel, "All that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take what is Mine and make it known to you." In the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we see a "divine flow." The Father sends the Son into the world, and the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit into our world today so that the Father's love given in the Son flows into our lives.

Government controversies usually involve so much energy and effort expended both in trying to find out and trying to deflect, "Who is at fault? Who is to blame?" People are eager to point the blame, slow to accept responsibility, and determined to defend themselves.

But we shouldn't be surprised about that. We do it all the time among ourselves. A comedian once said that parents aren't really parents until they have more than one child because otherwise they don't have to deal with a scene like this: "He did it!" "No, you did it!" How much tension is caused in marriages because it is more important for us to convince ourselves that we won an argument than it is to build each other up in love?

Now imagine God acting that way. The Father becomes jealous of the Son, because He gets so much recognition. The Son thinks the Father is patronizing. The Holy Spirit feels left out and forgotten. We would be doomed, lost in our sin. But instead the divine flow passed on the love—no jealousy, no pettiness, no defensiveness, no worrying about who gets the credit. There is just love. Why? It is for you and me, to save us from eternal jealousy, pettiness, and defensiveness.

Seventy-seven years ago on this day the Allies stormed the beaches at Normandy, France on D-Day during World War II. The man who pushed for that invasion more than any other was General of the Army George Marshall. Marshall organized the army from a small group into the massive force that helped win the war. He did it by reminding people to "work the problem." Instead of worrying about who was to blame or who got the credit, Marshall insisted

that the important thing was to accomplish what needed to be done. Yet Marshall is most famous for what worked with after the war. He was Secretary of State when the US sent huge amounts of aid overseas to help Europe recover from the war. The program bears his name—the Marshall Plan. But it does because President Truman, who pushed for it, insisted on that name. He felt the program had a better chance of being accepted if it had Marshall's name. Truman said, "It is amazing how much can get done when you don't worry about who gets credit for it."

That's the attitude God gives to us. Yes, we know God deserves all the credit, but what did He do with it? The Father gave up His Son, who died for us on the cross, so the Spirit can bring the Son into our lives. That divine flow runs into us so that instead of pointing the blame, being defensive, or worrying about who gets credit, we love as God loves us.