



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily
Sunday, June 7, 2020

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity - Year A ((bilingual homily) John 3:16-18

Something unprecedented has come into our lives.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, almost three months ago, something unprecedented has come into our lives.

In the past, when we heard talk of death, we would be little concerned, as it would usually be the death of someone else. Even when we know that death can happen at any time, we some-how figure out a way that we are safe!

With the pandemic, this has changed. The question of death is now no longer limited to the death of others. Now it is personal, now it is the question of our own death. We no longer speak only of the death of others, such as the number of people who died of COVID-19 or from another illness. Talking about COVID-19 makes us consider death in general, but it also forces us to consider the possibility of our own death.

At all times, death was part of existence and dying was always a possibility to be considered, but somehow, we could keep it at a distance. Today, however, the reality of COVID-19 makes it impossible to keep death at a distance. We need to consider the possibility of death in a way that is more immediate, more felt, more concrete.

Furthermore, during this pandemic, the media talk without ceasing about questions related to COVID-19. This reminds us daily, in one way or another, that we must confront the possibility of death.

In this context, how are we to behave? When we find ourselves before death, before the possibility of my own death, now we ask ourselves, what will I become? How do I situate myself before death, when death is no longer something that I can keep at a distance, but seems closer, much closer, and more personal? More than ever, we are confronted with the question of death. And we cannot avoid it.

On one side are people who consider life like a journey. Life begins at a given moment, the moment of my birth, and it ends in death, and there is nothing more after my death. On the other side are others, believers, who say that life begins at birth, but it will not end with my death. These are the options, and we need to make a choice. And making this choice now leads right away to the question of faith.

Many questions now come to mind and make us think of the meaning of our own life. What makes it possible for me to view my death as a transition toward eternal life? Is death the end of my life? Is death the end of hope? Is death the end of my plans? Is death the end of every-thing for me? Is the death of a loved one the end of that relationship?

Does death have the final say on life and love, on my life and our life? Will death have the final word or is death just a transition?

How we answer these questions gives us an indication of the way we look at life, at the way we consider life, and this can depend on the outlook on life of each person.

Ultimately, if we think that death has the last word in life, we may find reasons to live only when things go well. When all goes well, we can find reasons to love! But when things go badly, for one reason or another, how do we continue to find reasons to continue to live? Why want we continue to live? Why would we want to continue to love when it seems impossible? When all goes well, we say yes to life! But if things go badly, or when we think that all is wrong in our life, why continue to struggle, why continue to live?

Most people consider the question of death as a reality with which we can deal at a later time.

It is a question that we can think about tomorrow. Today, we are busy with life and we will think of death when we have the time to think about it. But COVID reminds us that we cannot postpone this question to some tomorrow. We cannot postpone this to the next day. Now is the time to think of our death. We must think of it.

Our first reaction might be to avoid death, to flee! We can do so in many ways. We can lose ourselves in computer games, spending hours on a screen, immersed in entertainment that seems to take us out of real life, so that we can put off reflecting on the meaning of life. But when the entertainment ends, we are where we started. We cannot forever put off the question of the meaning of our life, the meaning that we are to give to our life.

What is the meaning of my life if death is to have the final say on my life? Or, on the contrary, what is the meaning of my life if death is its transitions toward eternal life?

This brings us back to the question of faith. What does it mean to believe, today? What does it mean to say, "I believe"? What comes to mind? What does it mean to you when you say "I believe"? What do you believe in? Who do you believe in?

We could say that we believe in God. We believe that God exists. This is already a huge statement! To believe in God is to believe that life begins before us and continues after us, and it definitely means that it means believing in eternal life.

For us to exist, it is necessary that an eternal being exists. We are mortal beings that have a beginning and an end. Our history, the history of humanity, has a beginning and an end. The history of the universe had a beginning, some billions of years ago, and it will have an end, and God knows when. Everything has a beginning and everything has an end.

If everything has a beginning and an end however, we can say that there is nothingness, that nothing exists! For something to exist, there must be an eternal reality. If there is nothing at any given moment, then there is nothing afterwards, because nothing comes from nothingness! For something to exist, there must be an eternal being at work. For a reality with a beginning and an end to exist, an eternal reality is required.

Then we can say, "I believe in a God." It means that I believe in a God, who is the eternal being. I believe in a God, who is eternal life. I believe in a God, source of all that exists. I believe that there is a God.

Now we can go a little further. We can say "I believe in God!" To state that we believe in God is to take it a step further. "I believe in God" is to say that I believe in God who exists. "I believe in God," is to say that I give things over to God. I give myself over to God. I give my life over to God. I give my death over to God. I put my thirst for happiness into God's hands. I give my worries over to God. I give my illness over to God or put the illness of a loved one in God's hands. I place all suffering, my own and that of others, in God's hands. I place the injustice and the racism in God's hands. I put everything, absolutely everything in the hands of God.

Now we come to understand that the question goes much farther than whether God exists or not. The question goes much farther than believing in eternal life. Now it becomes a question of living now, in this world with my weaknesses, my frailties, and when nobody can deny the fact that I exist and live in the world. It is because I live and exist today in the world that I can put my whole life into God's hands.

Now the question is no longer only about my death. It is about now. It is about my life now, in the present, in every moment. I am invited to place my whole life into God's hands now, and this includes my death, when the moment has come. But beginning now, I have the possibility of putting my life into the hands of God.

What allows us to transition from "I believe in a God who exists" to "I believe in God and I place my life in his hands"? To understand, we must listen to what Saint John says in his Gospel today, "God is love."

God is love. Because God is love, he comes into the world through love and reveals to us that in Jesus Christ, we are called to be children of God for all eternity. God comes into the world to give us the strength to live, the strength to love and to forgive. He has the power to transform death into the transition to eternal life.

Because God is love, I can place my life into his hands. No matter my faith, no matter my sins, no matter how far I have strayed from God or how close I remained, in every stage of life, God is love.

God is love means that God the Father never stops looking at me as his beloved child. It also means that God the Son never stops giving his life for me, never stops giving his grace so that I may have life and life in fullness. Finally, it means that God the Holy Spirit never stops coming to me to open my heart to the presence of God. Because God is love.

I believe that God exists. I believe in God, and I put my life into his hands. Let us ask for the gift of faith. The gift of faith, as faith is always a gift.

At the same time, God offers us this gift that transforms our life, a gift that transforms the way that I look at others, and that transforms my outlook on life, because my life is for all eternity within the plan of the love of God.

Why did Jesus Christ reveal to us that He is the Son of the Father? Why do the Father and the Son want to give us the Holy Spirit? Why reveal to us the life of God? Is it only to tell us about who God is? Or is it also to reveal to us who we are? What is particular about the revelation of Jesus Christ is not only that it reveals who God is or about his love for us, it also reveals who we are as human beings! That we come from the love of God and that his plan is a plan of love for eternal life! That his love is given to us today, here and now, every day. Jesus Christ comes to give a goal to the life of everyone.

The Gospel today says that God the Father sends his Son into the world, but at the same time he adds that it is not about loving the world in general, it is not only about loving humanity in general, it is about each one of us. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, whoever, will have eternal life. Therefore, it is each and every one of us. Someone might think, "Oh, God loves everyone but He doesn't love me. How can He love me? I've done so many bad things in my life. How can He love me?" No! The love of God is for everyone! Everyone! The problem is not that we are sinners or that there is a failure of love in our lives. That is not the problem! It is a problem, but it is not THE problem! The problem is that we are slow to recognize the reality that we need the mercy of God.

It is very different when you say: "Oh, I have nothing to improve in my life. Everything is perfect. I am doing alright; I have no problems!" Then, every time you do something bad or maybe you hurt someone; you just don't see it! You don't recognize it; you think that it is because of others!

You say to yourself, “There are problems in the world, or my life, but it’s not because of me it’s because of others! It’s because of other people! It’s not my problem, it’s not because of me!” The problem is our difficulty to look at ourselves in the mirror and to say “It is because of me!” Of course, it is also because of others, because we are all sinners! But it is also because of me.

Therefore, I need the mercy of God. Everyone needs the mercy of God! The whole of humanity, every single one of us! We all need the mercy of God! Somehow though, if we can reach the point where we can say, “God, forgive me! God, I have sinned! God, forgive me,” it will open the door to the grace of God, to the life of God, to the love of God, to his mercy, to his presence, and to his power to transform our lives.

Jesus Christ came into the world, sent by the Father and the Holy Spirit. He has the power to transform us into children of the light, into children of God, into children of the Eternal Father, through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ.

So, as we contemplate the mystery of the Holy Trinity, we also contemplate in some way the mystery of our own humanity. That life is bigger than what we see, that love is greater than what we see; because life is God and love is God.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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