



**Trinity Sunday
& Launch of 2020 Plenary Council**

Homily

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Saturday 26 May 2018

Tonight, as we gather in the Cathedral to celebrate the solemn feast of the Holy Trinity, we also begin our journey as an Archdiocese towards the Plenary Council, which the bishops of Australia have convened for 2020. They have done so in the belief that the whole Church in Australia, that is all the people who are a part of the Church in Australia, are called to the urgent, challenging but Spirit-led task of trying to discern exactly what God, at this moment in our history, is asking of us.

As I explained last week in the Cathedral when the Plenary Council was launched nationally, in simple terms, a Plenary Council is a solemn gathering of all the Catholic bishops of a region, in our case of the whole of Australia, to prayerfully discern what we believe God is asking of us all. The bishops know that to do this we need to listen to the wisdom of all God's people, for the Holy Spirit whose coming at Pentecost we celebrated last Sunday speaks to all the members of the Church when we are open to his presence in our lives. Over the next 12 months there will be opportunities for all of us who care about the Church to share our hopes and dreams together. It is this sharing of hopes and dreams, based on our prayerful listening to the voice of God's Spirit speaking in our lives and in our hearts, which will guide the bishops as they seek to be the humble servants and shepherds of God's Church.

The celebration of the Holy Trinity is an especially appropriate time for us to launch this major event here in our Archdiocese because it is in this feast that we discover the very heart of our faith. Believing what we do about Jesus as the Son of God we know that Jesus in his humanity unveils the hidden mystery of God to us in a way that we can at least to some extent understand. In doing so Jesus also reveals the nature of our human and Christian vocation, for we are all called to be together the signs and bearers of God's love for others, just as he was. On Trinity Sunday we ask a fundamental question which is even more pressing this year: who is this God, whom Jesus makes known, and what is this God calling us to do and to be?

One answer can be found in the Book of Genesis, one of the most profound and far reaching statements in the Bible, where we are told that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" ... and so God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.



Of course it was only with the coming of Jesus that it became possible to begin to fully grasp the true meaning of this statement. In revealing to us the nature of his relationship with his heavenly Father and in proclaiming the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit Jesus reveals to us the inner nature of God in whose image and likeness we are made. God is one, yes, and there is no other, but that one God is, beyond all our imagining, a community of mutual giving and receiving, a communion of love. The very names we have been taught to use for the one God reveal this to us: God is Father, God is Son, and God is Spirit, one profound, unbreakable giving and receiving of love. While we may not understand how this can be, the beauty and power of this understanding of God, once we begin to grasp it, cannot help but draw us into the great mystery of God who is love.

If we are made in the image and likeness of God, then we are made to be an image and a likeness of this divine communion of mutual and life-giving love. The only way we can be who God has created us to be, and destined us to be, is by living in love. We are made to generously offer our love to others, we are made to gratefully receive the gift of love from others, and we are made to create communities where love is our purpose and our goal.

Of course we do not always achieve our purpose or realise our goal. This is true of us as individuals, as families, as Christian communities and as the Church more generally. This is why the Feast of the Holy Trinity calls us to seek forgiveness and healing for whatever we have done to destroy or diminish the communion of love which is the sacred sign of God's presence among us. And of course it also invites us to recommit ourselves to the task of being builders and not destroyers of communion, in our homes and families, in our parish and Christian communities, and in the wider world in which we live and move.

At the heart of the Plenary Council is the call to prayerfully discern just what it is that God is asking of us at this time. In a very real sense today's feast already provides us with the answer. God is asking us, as His Church, to become in practice what we are in our deepest and truest identity: a living, powerful, unmistakable and convincing sign and bearer of God's love made known to us in Jesus. We have not always lived up to this ideal: indeed we must recognise that we are in many ways very far from this ideal. We do know where we should be heading; now we need to help each other discern the ways to get there. This is the task, the promise and the hope of the Plenary Council. This is what we, as an Archdiocese, are committing ourselves to this evening and will commit ourselves to next weekend in all our parishes and other communities.

In whatever ways you can, please share with the rest of the Church your own understanding of what God is asking of us. Through sharing, through listening, through reflecting and through praying together we trust that God's Holy Spirit will lead us along the paths of truth and holiness. And so we pray, *"Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful ones, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Amen"*.