

Welcome, everyone, as we gather to celebrate this Eucharist. I am grateful to have this opportunity to come around the altar with you and worship our heavenly Father.

I've commented before in past homilies on Cain's rhetorical question to God after he murders his brother Abel. If you recall, Cain was jealous of his brother because Abel's offering found more favor with God than Cain's did, and so out of jealousy, Cain murdered him. God asks Cain where his brother is, and Cain responds, "How should I know? Am I my brother's keeper?" Every so often, you'll hear someone quote this line to justify their lack of care or concern for another person. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The first murderer is hardly a good authority to quote, especially since the answer is, "Yes." We are our brother's keeper; meaning, we are responsible for each other.

I would like to expand on that today as we celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. We share a number of beliefs with our non-Christian brothers and sisters, but this is not one of them. Only Christians believe in the Trinity. To call oneself a Christian is to say, among other things, that you believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity. That is a uniquely Christian belief, one that sets us apart from non-Christians.

One consequence of this belief is that we believe that God is in an eternal relationship. God is Father to the Son. God is Son to the Father. God eternally proceeds from them both. God is not solitary, lonely. He was not in need of someone to love before He created us. In a mysterious way, the three divine Persons of the one Godhead are in a perfect, self-giving, eternal relationship of love. It is God's very nature to love and be loved, and He does that within Himself as a Most Holy Trinity.

And we are made in His image. It is a part of our nature to love and to be loved. Imagine going through life without ever loving another person, and without ever being loved by another person. It would literally be an inhuman existence. To be human is to love and to be loved.

But we are not God. We cannot love and be loved unless there is someone outside of us to love and by whom to be loved. God is unique in that way. He can be in relationship without any other being because He is Triune. We are in need of others - which means that others need us. Others need us to love them, and others need to be able to love us. They cannot do it alone, they cannot find the fulfillment of their human nature without love, any more than we can. We are our brother's keeper, we must love others, and we must allow ourselves to be loved by them.

And that means all of them. Jesus chides his disciples, “Anyone can love a friend. What merit is there in that? Love your enemy.” The Triune God loves every one of His sons and daughters, so who are we to withhold our love from any of them? How can we have a higher standard in sharing our imperfect love than God, who loves perfectly?

The temptation is to put up walls around our hearts, to not even try to be in communion with those who are different from us. We may think, “their values are too different, their culture is too different, their fundamental beliefs are too different from mine. I cannot be in communion with them. I will focus on loving those with whom I share more in common, and just leave everyone else alone.”

That is not how God created us, it is not His plan for the world, and so that doesn’t work. We cannot choose to love only some, and ignore the rest. Our very nature will rebel against that. We can see the results when we fail to love all of our brothers and sisters, especially when we fail to love those with whom we differ.

The problems of the world are complex and messy, but they can be distilled down to a failure to love. If we all loved God with all of our heart, and loved our neighbors as ourselves, the world would be a much better place. So we must not turn our backs, we must offer our love to everyone.

Now, in this fallen world, that means we will have to open ourselves up to being hurt, and we will be hurt from time to time. To love is to make oneself vulnerable. There are consequences to being a disciple of Christ, to obeying the commandment to love, and one of them is persecution. But fear of being hurt must not prevent us from loving. If we are hurt because we have loved, God will see and reward us. If we refuse to love for fear of being hurt, God will see that, too, and we will face the consequences.

God is relational. We are made in His image. It is in our very nature to want to love each other and be loved by each other. We are our brother's keeper. Let us overcome our fear and open ourselves to love each other, so that God's love can shine forth through us.