

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Matthew S. O'Donnell

Lectionary 166:

[Prov 8:22-31](#) [There is rejoicing in the created world.]

[Ps 8:4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#) [O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!]

[Rom 5:1-5](#) [Hope and peace are found in the Holy Spirit.]

[John 16:12-15](#) [The Spirit of truth makes known the teachings of Jesus.]

Possible preaching themes:

- “**Hope** does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5). Growing in the theological virtue of hope occurs through steadfastness, endurance, and proven character. Finding hope in the difficult moments of life is requires patience and diligence. Growth in this virtue can help one discover the depth of God’s love.
- There is **beauty in the created world**. Natural disasters, sickness, and violence have become normative experiences for human beings, yet God’s original and contemporary creative acts flow from goodness. Appreciating God’s creative design asks people of faith to remain hope filled in the face of that which is difficult to understand and explain.
- Discerning what is true is an action of **surrendering one’s own perspectives** to grow in relationship with God and others. Communicating truth in polarized and complicated moments and social contexts becomes an important mode of relating to others with respect, dignity, and love.

Possible scientific resources:

- **Practicing empathy** can be a source of support for someone who is hurting and seeking hope in difficult moments <https://www.verywellmind.com/cognitive-and-emotional-empathy-4582389>
 - Cognitive empathy can be described as taking another person’s perspective, whereas emotional empathy can be described as sharing in another’s emotional experience
 - The virtue of hope is a gift from God that is composed of desire and expectation
 - Practicing empathy can create an emotional connection that allows one individual to accompany another in times of despair, resulting in a connection between persons that can contribute to the cultivation of hope

- The **genesis of the universe** and life requires both a scientific and a theological exploration. There is a beauty in the created world that reveals a fuller insight into who God is <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK230211/>
 - Science demonstrates that the universe is expanding
 - Research on chemical evolution points to the existence of life more than 4 billion years ago
 - The critical dialogue of what can be observed in the natural world and the belief that God is the author of creation does not have to be antithetical

- **Anthroposemiotics** is the study of human communication. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolving-irrationality/202102/shared-truth-is-key-human-cooperation>
 - Human beings have the capacity for cooperation and the sharing of information
 - Conflicting views or beliefs do not need to result in the fracturing of communities
 - The search for a common truth can result in greater cooperation

Homily outline: The Beauty of Creation

- **We are part of something greater than ourselves**
 - Ps 90:10—"Seventy is the sum of our years, or eighty, if we are strong." Average life expectancy in the United States is 77 years old (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/life-expectancy.htm>)
 - Scientists believe the universe to be between 10 and 15 billion years old, with many agreeing on 13.8 billion years
 - It is hard to imagine the age of the universe in comparison to our human experience
 - Celebrating the Most Holy Trinity invites us as people of faith to first see ourselves as belonging to a communion of persons that has always existed
 - Before time
 - Before the natural world
 - Before the moment of the "Big Bang" (<https://www.space.com/25126-big-bang-theory.html>)

- **God is the creator of all**
 - Prov 8:22-31 presents the figure of "Woman Wisdom." Who she is, is not clear but she existed at the very dawn of creation
 - This places humanity within the created order and orientates us to the eternal
 - God creates: "When the Lord established the heavens I was there, when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep; when he made firm the skies above, when he fixed fast the foundations of the earth" (Prov 8:26-27)
 - The Psalmist celebrates God who creates every creature (Ps 8:8-9)

- It is God who creates the human person in God’s own divine image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27)
- **The science of creation and belief in God as creator do not necessitate conflict**
 - Scientific inquiry looks to what can be observed in the natural order
 - As scientific disciplines, astronomy and geology continue to assist in learning more about the evolution of the universe
 - Edwin Hubble’s discovery of the expanding universe
 - Rocks, sediments, and fossils offer a geological record
 - Faith in the Triune God reveals the mystery of Jesus who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever more” (Heb 13:8)
 - Appreciating what science posits about creation can aid in celebrating the generous gift of God’s creative act
 - While God is unchanging, scientific inquiry continues to uncover greater insight into the complexity of the universe and its creation
 - Scientists look to the past in dialogue with present indicators to make predictions for future sustainability
- **Caring for creation** is a responsibility and result of living in community
 - Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* reminds us that the earth is our common home https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
 - Caring for the sustainability of the earth can bring the human family into greater communion with one another
 - The challenges, like climate change, facing our common home requires solidarity and a shared commitment to change our human practices so that we can pass on the gift of creation to generations to come
- **The beauty of creation** leads to rejoicing
 - Creation is a gift whose immensity reminds us of the greatness of God—God is beyond human knowledge
 - The more we discover about the universe the more we come to appreciate the intricacies of creation and the wonder of its Creator
 - Understanding that God creates us uniquely within the vastness of time and space should lead to rejoicing and mission us to care for all of creation and humankind
 - As created beings have something of God within us, that Trinitarian spark must be celebrated and nourished
 - Worship is a special moment for rejoicing in all God creates and missioning us into stewardship

Tags: astronomy, communion, creation, *Laudato Si’*, Trinity

About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.