

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity: On Oboes, Cats and St. Augustine

In the world of classical music, or more precisely, in the world of oboe players, there is one name that distinguishes one oboe as superior to all the others. That name is Paul Laubin. Laubin oboes cost over \$4,000. Paul Laubin and his three assistants produced only 35 oboes a year. He has passed away, but his business, purchased by Jim Phelan in 2022 is still thriving. There is a waiting list of 11 years to acquire a Laubin oboe. Paul Laubin's father, Alfred, taught him every aspect of oboe making. He taught him how to carve sixty year old Honduran redwood. He taught him how to silverplate each of the forty-six keys. Most importantly, he taught him to put a piece of himself into every one of the oboes. Alfred taught Paul that he would be rewarded by hearing the beautiful tone that only a Laubin oboe can produce.

The oboe maker can be a parable for us of the heart of our belief in God, the Trinity. God is the Creator and Maker of all things. In a sense, he gave us a piece of himself in his Son, Jesus Christ. In return he hears his music, God the Spirit, played through the instruments he has created. Paul Laubin loved his oboes because he saw himself in each oboe and because each oboe produced his deep and unique love of music. God loves each of us because He created us. He gave himself to us so completely that we can fill the world with the music of His Love.

We come to an understanding of the Trinity when we recognize God's love for us. He created us and loved us enough to give himself to us. He rejoices in seeing the world filled with his love working through us. The Father is the Creator. The Gift of Himself is the Son. The love that fills the world is the Spirit.

The theologian who best presented God as love was St. Augustine. St. Augustine put it this way: the Father is the One who Loves. The Son is the One who is Loved. The Spirit is the very act of Loving. My own simplification of this for the young people and for myself is that God is love in every possible use of the word. He is the Subject Love, he is the Object love, and he is the verb Love.

Let me read for you one of the most beautiful passages from St. Augustine's *Confessions*: Just relax, sit back, and open yourself up to the love of the Lord through St. Augustine.

Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new. late have I loved you. You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness (I guess he means selfishness), I plunged into the things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called. you shouted. You broke my deafness. You flashed. You shone. You dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant

for you. I have tasted you; now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me and I burned for your peace.

And the most famous passage from St. Augustine:

It is you who move us to delight in your praise. For you have made us for yourself: and our heart is restless until it rest in you.

The essence of God is Love. And we human beings are made in his image. We are integral, whole, when we give ourselves over to God's love. We reflect our very nature and are at peace with the world when we take a step away from our own selfish drives and trust ourselves into the hands of sacrificial love.

I also wanted to tell you about cats. Actually, I'm referring to the old musical, *CATS*. *CATS* is based on T. S. Elliot's *Book of Practical Cats*. These are poems that seem to be about cats, but are really about people. He talks about the cats who are never happy with what they have; cats who put on airs, cats who are mischievous, cats who are malicious, etc.

At the beginning of the play there is a poem that is called the naming of cats. Elliot says that every cat has three names. The first name is the superficial name its owners give the cat--like Muffy or Fluffy. The second name is the name that the other cats give the cat, like Mephistopheles the magical cat, or Deuteronomy the wisest of the cats. Then there is the third name. The third name that the cat has is the deep name that expresses exactly who that cat is. The poem goes on to say that when you see a cat in deep contemplation, the cat is considering his or her true name.

We all have names in our families. This girl is Cookie. That boy is Skip. We have names by which we are known legally. Cookie is really Phyllis Jones. Skip is actually John Smith. But we Christians also have deep names that express exactly who we are. Phyllis is this reflection of God's love, care and gift of himself for her. She fills the world with the presence of God by being the Person God created her to be. What is Phyllis's deep, true name? I don't know, and she will spend her life searching the depths of who she is. But I know and she knows this, her deep, true name expresses the very being of God. And so also, my deep, true name and your deep true name express the very being of God. For you and I were baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The celebration of the Trinity is a celebration of the essence, the core of our being. We are the Creator's work. We reflect the eternal sacrifice of the Son. We fill the world with the Love that is the Spirit.

Oboes, Cats and St. Augustine. In the Trinity we recognize that the depth of God's love for us is the very core of who he is. In the Trinity we recognize that for us to be genuine, whole people, our lives must reflect the being of God in whom we have been named. Today we praise God who has called us and baptized us in his name, the

Name of the Father, and of the Son and of Holy Spirit.