

This past Tuesday I had the honor of delivering the graduation speech for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders at All Saints Catholic School. In preparing for the evening I tried to recall my own 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation. I knew it would be a challenge trying to remember back that far, but the longer I tried to remember, the more difficult it became. Then, after a couple of days, it finally came to me: I didn't have an 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation! Duh! The year I entered the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, my elementary

school eliminated the 8th grade. So, when it came time for me to go to 8th grade, I had to change schools to attend the Cathedral School. At that time, Cathedral went on to the 12th grade... therefore....no 8th grade graduation. I stayed there only for one year, and then changed schools again for high school.

With that being said, one thing I do remember from my elementary school days was the technique the nuns used to help us understand the Doctrine of the Trinity. They all used a three-leaf

clover; one stem, 3 leaves: one God, three Persons.

This evening we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. It is always celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost.

Because it is a mystery, the Holy Trinity is impossible to understand by reason alone. By faith we can affirm the truths about the Holy Trinity that have been divinely revealed to us and handed down to us through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The Holy Trinity is the central mystery of

the Christian Faith, the very source and light of all other mysteries of Faith. As such, it is the most fundamental and indispensable truth of Christianity.

The most Holy Trinity is one God in three divine Persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And each is the same divine substance, essence, or nature. They are differentiated as three Persons only in relation to one another: it is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds. In understanding the Trinity

we need to be careful not to attempt to distinguish the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity by their perceived functions as though it is the Father alone who creates, the Son alone who redeems, and the Holy Spirit alone who sanctifies. All three are united in will and share in all divine works.

Sisters and brothers, over the years I have come to understand the Trinity in one word. That word is **love**. I believe it is in God's nature to share his life and love. *God **is** love* as the Scripture

tells us in the 1<sup>st</sup> Letter of Saint John, 4:16.

And love, if it is genuine, cannot keep to itself; it is naturally directed to another. Since God is love, and love must be directed outwardly, there must be someone to whom God extends this love, not just in time, but also through all eternity. That person is the Son. And because the love of the Father and the Son is so complete, so intense and eternal, it is itself a living, divine person, that of the Holy Spirit.

[PAUSE]

As I talk about love, it has been hard to find evidence of the love of God in this country during the last couple of weeks. Racial unrest has raised its ugly head again. Unlike the Trinity, there is no mystery as to why we are where we are today. There is a reason. I would like to share a personal story to start shining a light on that reason.

As some of you may already know, I'm a graduate of Benedictine High School. I was one of just two African Americans in my class.

In the spring of my sophomore year, --1966--, we celebrated the completion of the athletic season at a recreation club in western Henrico. We had good food, fun games, of course, the letter ceremony. Then, at long last, we could go in the pool.

Well, to make a long story short, plans changed.

When it finally came time to go swimming, management spoke privately to our faculty sponsor, telling him that ‘ “*HE*” could not go in the pool.’ The ‘he’ was me.

I would not be allowed in the pool because I was Black.

I felt the bitter sting of racism that every black person in this country will experience at some point in life.

Racism affects us all.

To their credit, that day the faculty advisors replied with, "Fine. Then no one will go swimming". In solidarity, my athlete classmates and I all packed up our gear, got back on the green Benedictine bus, and left together. But everyone had their day ruined because of that one racist incident.

Now lets fast-forward to 2020.

*Christian Cooper*, a young black man — a birdwatcher — was [reported to the police May 25](#) by Amy Cooper (no relation), a young white woman, who called 911 to say that " ‘an African American man’ was threatening her” in New York's Central Park, merely because he had the gall to **ask** her to comply with the park's posted regulations to leash her dog.

*George Floyd*, an unarmed 46-year-old African American man, was [brutally](#)

killed, also on May 25 in Minneapolis by a white police officer who knelt on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, despite being restrained, despite the urgent requests of onlookers, despite his repeated desperate pleas: "I can't breathe".

To understand race relations in this country the Christian Cooper incident is the most informative. As horrendous as the George Floyd case is, we understand police brutality. We have seen it before. We try to explain it by saying it's "just a

few bad apples”. We seem to forget the whole quote: “One bad apple spoils the whole bunch”.

In the Christian Cooper incident the question to ask is, “why did she call 911?”. The short answer is: *implicit or unconscious bias*.

‘Implicit bias’ or ‘unconscious bias’ refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

Miss Cooper’s actions tell me she has bought into the stereotype that black men are dangerous; that black people are

inferior; that black people have no right to tell a white person what to do.

I know you don't want to hear or believe this, but ever since this country enslaved black people for economic gains, we have been labeled an inferior race of people. The stain of that label is with us today.

I hope everyone does the hard work of examining their own implicit biases. And if you do one thing about it today, I strongly encourage you to read an article

in the June 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the National Catholic Reporter by Fr. Bryan

Massingale: *The assumptions of white privilege and what we can do about it.*

To help you remember, I'll say it again: the June 1<sup>st</sup> National Catholic Reporter editorial by Fr. Bryan Massingale. He makes my point in greater detail than I have time to do now.

I mentioned in the beginning that I spoke at All Saints this week. I have also had Zoom sessions with our Youth Ministers and our Campus Ministers.

The consensus seems to be that our young people want a “quick fix” to improve race relations. I had to make them aware that there will *never* be a quick fix. Even though the fight against pervasive systemic racism is still being waged, the much tougher job in regards to race, is to change the hearts and minds of individuals.

As Christians we know that only God can change us. As disciples of Jesus Christ, our job is to help God make a change. Inwardly, we can do that by first dealing with our own implicit biases. We

all have them. We can become aware and resist temptation to passively give in to our own biases. Outwardly, we can have the courage to call out the evil when we encounter it. When we hear the racist joke or the derogatory comment about a group of people, say something. Let people know it's wrong!

Sisters and brothers, Paul tells us in our second reading to  
“Mend our ways,  
encourage one another,  
agree with one another,

**live in peace,  
and the God of love and peace will be  
with you.”**

Good advice we need to heed it!

Deacon Charles

06/06/2020