A father and son getting together for a pizza isn't all that unusual of an occurrence. But for Darrel, as he arrived at the local pizza parlor one night to meet his son, Charles, at Charles' favorite restaurant, it was hard for him to walk in. It was a meeting that he was kind of dreading, but knew that he had to have with his son.

Darrel loved his son, but their relationship was complicated. He had no problems communicating with Larry, Charles' older brother. Larry and Darrel didn't talk much at all; they just did things together, such as hunting or working on cars. Darrel treated Larry in kind of a rough way, much like the way the guys at the construction sites that Darrel worked at were treated, and Larry seemed to respond well to that. But Charles was different. Early on, he was more sensitive than Larry, and when Darrel would get on his case growing up to motivate him, it didn't seem to do much but push them further apart. In his mind, he was passing on what he was given growing up – the hard side of love or tough love, but as for the warmth and acceptance, he didn't see it as his job. In his mind, he felt that "it's my job to put clothes on their backs and food on the table; it's their mother's job to make them feel loved." He told himself this many times, but in his mind, he couldn't quite convince himself that this was all there was to being a dad. He came to see that a big part of the problem was that

Charles wanted a closer relationship, but that he just wasn't quite open to it. And so what had happened was that Charles had quit talking to him altogether. It was the same thing Darrel had done as a teenager with his own tough father; Charles simply withdrew to a safe distance and decided to stay out of his dad's way. Darrel had been doing the same thing his whole life; his wife and son had been essentially pursuing him, but he'd been running away and trying to keep at a "comfortable" distance from both of them.

Things though began to change when Darrel went on a men's retreat. It was here that he learned that as important as the love of a mother is, a child needs more – they need the wholehearted love of their father as well. And at the retreat, he was confronted with an unexpected question: "When was the last time you put your arms around your son and told him face to face that you love him?" The problem for Darrel is he couldn't think of a first time. He came to see that he had been only loving Charles halfheartedly, and that his son needed both sides of love from the same person. He needed a man who was secure enough in himself that he wouldn't hand off the warm and loving actions to his wife, but be there for his son completely. What had happened was that over the years, he had used tough love, which was needed, but without the other half, caused Charles to have fear

and resentment towards him in the same way that Darrel had to his dad. And finally, after he came to that conclusion, he was able to talk his son into meeting him at the pizza place after football practice one day.

The encounter began quite cordially. Charles walked in and said hello, and shook his dad's hand. And even though he was 6' 2", he was looking up to his dad, who was still bigger than he was and in great shape at the age of 51, keeping the great physical condition of his football days in high school. They sat down, and Darrel said to his son "I've been doing a lot of thinking lately. It's been hitting me hard that this is your last summer at home. You'll be leaving for college soon. And along with the bags of clothing you'll be packing, you'll also be taking emotional bags that, for good or bad, I've helped you pack over the years."

Charles often would lighten up conversations with a joke, but this time, he listened attentively to what his dad was saying, because it was out of character. Dad rarely talked about things that were serious, let alone brought emotion into a conversation. But he knew this conversation was something entirely different.

Darrel proceeded and asked Charles to think back as far as he could, and said "remember every time I've hurt your feelings and never made things

right; every time I've made you feel unloved or inadequate by something I've said or done. I know we're different people. I can see now that I was always pretty hard on you. Actually, I was way too tough on you most of the time. I've tried to push you into being the person I thought you should be. Now I realize I've spent very little time listening to who you really want to become. So feel free to share with me anything I've done that's hurt you, and all I'm going to do is listen. Then I'd like us to talk about it, and I want to ask your forgiveness for each thing you can think of. You don't need to be packing any extra, negative baggage that I may have given you. You've got enough ahead of you over the next four years in college without that." He went on, getting emotional, and said "I realize there's been a lot of water under the bridge – a lot of wasted years. We may be here all night, and I'm ready for that. But first, you need to know how much I love you and how proud I am of you."

Charles really didn't know what to think at this point, as the emotions began to fill his heavy heart. He had seen the words "I love you" written on many Christmas cards in his dad's handwriting over the years, but this was actually the first time he'd heard them from his dad. He was quite unprepared and caught off guard. Not knowing what to say, he started to stammer "dad, don't worry about the past, I know you love me" and move

on. But Darrel wouldn't let him. He insisted that Charles put his mind on "rewind" and let his thoughts fly back across the pictures that had accumulated over 17 years of being with his dad. And slowly, he began to let the memories out. He talked about the hurt at the table; the years he spent becoming a great football player when he didn't even like playing the game – he did it to please his dad, when really he preferred playing soccer. He spoke of resentment that no matter how hard he had tried to live up to his older brother, but never felt like he could. And he also spoke of the harsh comments that his dad made over the years that were meant to motivate, but really just caused him discouragement or hurt. The conversation continued for several hours, and Charles saw a genuine softness and sorrow in the eyes of his dad. He even heard words of remorse, and knew that his father meant them.

When the conversation came to an end, Darrell looked at his son and said "I know this was quick notice for you to have to think back on 17 years. So just remember, my door is always open if there's anything else I need to ask your forgiveness for." Gary Smalley, a nationally known speaker who also holds a PhD as a counselor, in sharing this story, points out that "Dinner was over, but a new relationship was just beginning for them. After 17 years of being strangers to living under the same roof, they were finally

on their way to finding each other…people cheered the fall of the Berlin Wall that divided a city, and that night in a restaurant, we can just imagine that angels stood all around and cheered as the first hole in an emotional wall between a father and son was blown open." In fact, as they both stood, a few people were surprised to see a big high school football player give his dad a bear hug, but both stood there oblivious to the stares, sharing a moment that was 17 years in the making.

Today on Trinity Sunday, we celebrate how our God is Three Divine Persons united in a single God. And while it can be a lot to get our minds around, the best way we can describe the Trinity is to think of it as the overflowing love of God.

In the Trinity, we see that God is love itself. Also being in itself, a good way to think of God is love; and if God is love there must be a lover which is the Son. We see this in the Bible; the unity of Father and Son is emphasized by Jesus; and even in the Old Testament, we hear in Genesis God saying let us make man in our own image; well who is this "our" or "us? then if God is not three in one? The Spirit then becomes the breath of God. And because God is love itself, we are then caught up in the mystery of love. The love is so strong that it overflows into the Holy Spirit. This is why we say in the Creed "we believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the

Son.” We also don’t say that God is three separate Gods, but rather distinct Persons, united as one God. This is because God is a love which is completely one. Christ reveals this love, and this is why you may see depictions of the Crucifixion as a Trinitarian act, with the Father looking down and the Spirit between the Son and the Father.

What does that mean for us?

For one, we must remember we are so deeply loved by God in every sense of the word. All of us can carry pain. Sometimes it’s the self inflicted wounds of sin; sometimes the shame of thinking people can’t know our darkest secrets; or the pain of having suffered loss or betrayal or just the pain of life. Other times a person can just not open the door to let God in. Adam and Eve’s first instinct was to hide from God, and while sin may have put distance for a time between God and Humanity, in Christ, God reaches out to us, and He does that time and time again on our altar, in our confessionals, and in many other ways through prayer. Never forget that God created you, and loves you more than you can ever imagine - so make time for Him. We’ll reflect on this again next week on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, where we call to mind the love poured out on our altar and Jesus being present with us on our journey through life with the gift of His love in the Eucharist.

However, this love has to change us, and that's what it did for Darrel. He was doing OK in a sense as a father in that he was correcting his kids as they aged, keeping a roof over their heads, but something was missing. Our Trinitarian God is a community. God is a unity of persons, who are lovingly relational. We are called to reflect the Trinity in our lives. So it goes without saying, this means we have to strive to love one another. This is where we get introspective and ask ourselves the hard questions. For those who are married and/or parents, how do you treat your loved ones? Do you listen to them, or are you a bit overbearing or insistent on getting your way? Do you recognize each child is unique? Do you listen without trying to talk over them? Are you humble and like Darrell admit if you made a mistake or could do something better? Do you guide and challenge with love and encourage your kids to chase their dreams remembering they are their dreams, not your own? With others, maybe you are harboring a grudge against someone, or having a hard time forgiving. Or maybe you find some people hard to love because of political beliefs. We can all have strong opinions - I certainly do - but sometimes emotion can lead to an ongoing bitterness and anger towards our neighbors. Remember: God does not just love some people, or have an asterisk next to the word "love." Do you give of your time to help others? Do you make time for God in your

life? As a priest, I ask myself these questions too looking at my prayer life, and how I'm doing with respect to my ministry balancing being a servant with leadership; to make sure I strive to respect the gifts of others, but have the fortitude to make difficult decisions when needed, and above all else that I'm doing what I can to bring people closer to God as a fisher of men. I often fail at this, but this is where the love of God is changing and challenging me. I'm a work in progress trying to become better through the love of the Trinity. Who we are is in part related to who we were - meaning our choices change us; the more we mistreat someone, the more we abuse images of the body, or the more we are oblivious to showing love and saying it too change us little by little, which is why its so key to open our eyes and minds and examine our consciences like Darrell did. So to reflect the Trinity, we need to ask ourselves how are we showing love to everyone, even to the people who might not be lovable. From the parent like Darrell saying "I love you" and talking about what that really means, to the parishioner volunteering to clean the church, to the person going on a mission trip to help the less fortunate, to people from different walks of life standing together against violence and hate, every day there are so many simple actions of love that we can do.

On Sunday afternoon I'm looking forward to visiting my dad, and I try to visit my parents on many Sundays after Mass, and it's always something I look forward to. Over the years, there wasn't really a moment like Darrell and Charles had, or Ray and John Kinsella from "Field of Dreams," in that it wasn't really needed. My dad, like yours I'm sure, is a hero to me in that he manifested the love of the Trinity in so many ways. He worked hard to provide like Darrell did for Charlie his son, but he was also living out his faith by being a man of prayer, and someone who was active in my life all the time, never too busy after a long day, and it's the little things he'd do that helped me to see what the faith looks like. He'd go the extra mile for people he served at his job in maintenance in the school system; he'd help his own parents and in-laws, and he'd quietly pray or read the Bible at night, and most importantly just be active in my life as he still is and now with his grandson Henry. We can read about God in theology books, but to understand God we have to have a relationship with God and com to know Him, and from that, become a fisher of men. That is what the Trinity is all about. May the Trinity open our eyes to the God who is love, and may we let that love transform us so we can in turn transform the world.