

## **TRINITY SUNDAY**

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I was taking my very first theology class at John Carroll University in Cleveland when the professor gave a pop quiz, describe the Trinity. Several people complained that we were not warned ahead of time, it wasn't part of our reading for that day's class, and we hadn't discussed the nature of the Trinity yet. He said, just give me your description; I don't want an academic answer. When he handed the quizzes back to us at the next class he told all of us that we got an A. He just wanted to see what our concept of the Trinity was before we discussed it in class. Just to let you know it took the theologians of the church over 400 years to define the Trinity, which is what the Nicene Creed that we recite every Sunday attempts to do. We've heard the Trinity described as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. God as three in one is hard to define because we are attempting to describe a mystery. We are attempting to describe God and as Paul says, (1Cor. 13:12) "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known." Our God is relational and we are attempting to describe a relationship. To me the Trinity is more a verb than a noun, we are describing how God relates to God's self and with us. God is love, a community of love between God, Jesus (God incarnate) and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says, 'The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.' (John 17:22-23) Then today's gospel passage from John refers to the Holy Spirit coming to guide us into living into God's truth, God's way of being in the world. We can only know how to be Jesus' disciples if we take time to be in relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Ignatius of Loyola designed his Spiritual Exercises so that anyone could deepen their relationship with God through Jesus guided by the Holy Spirit. It is only by taking time to be with God on a daily basis that we will notice how God is working in our lives. Ignatius designed the Spiritual Exercises around the life and ministry of Jesus. In Ignatian spirituality one enters into the scripture passage and meets Jesus. You don't have to go away anywhere to do this type of prayer. Ignatius actually developed a set of spiritual exercises to do over nine months during your normal day. It does require setting aside time to be with Jesus, just as you would to have coffee with a friend or go to the gym to do physical exercises, only these exercises strengthen your relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They involve reading a gospel passage and then talking with Jesus. They are guided meditations, but the guide is the Holy Spirit. The purpose is to deepen your relationship with God by meeting Jesus guided by the Spirit, to know how much God loves you.

In God we live and move and have our being, according to Paul. (Acts 17:28) We are one with God as God is one. The mystics of the church have experienced the oneness of God, but have a terrible time expressing it. How does one express something where you are encompassed by an all-embracing love? It is like attempting to describe how the air feels as you walk through it. If the wind is blowing we notice, but most of the time we don't pay any attention to the air that encompasses us, it's just there. That is how God's presence is, we are already living in God's love, we just don't normally notice it. If we were not living in the love of God we would die, as a fish dies out of the water. That is why we ask for forgiveness, for "sins known and unknown" because sin separates us from the love of God. When we sin we are fish out of water and God wants us back in the water. We are already in a loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. God, the three in one loves us.

Remember the breakfast on the beach scene in the Gospel according to John? It is a resurrection scene where the disciples are fishing, and Jesus is building a charcoal fire on the beach. Peter takes off his clothes, jumps into the water and comes to Jesus. Jesus asks Peter three times, do you love me? Peter responds each time with Yes, Lord, you know that I love you! But in Greek the words for love that Jesus and Peter use are different. Jesus uses "agape" the unconditional love of God, Peter uses "philo," brotherly love, how one loves a friend. The last time Jesus questions Peter he uses philo, to meet Peter where he is. God in Jesus meets us where we are. Wherever your relationship with God is right now, that's where God will meet you. You don't have to be better, change some characteristic or be in the right frame of mind. God will meet you right where you are. All you have to do is desire to be with God, to notice God's presence in your life.

God speaks to us through others also. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," writes Gerald Manley Hopkins. The other night we were sitting in the living room and could smell the flowering bushes in the back yard. The moon was full in a nearly cloudless sky. It was beautiful. Thank you Lord! The phone rings and it is a friend just checking to see how things are going and finding a time to have coffee, to be together. Thank you Lord! Walking the beach with a friend and seeing seals or here dolphins pop up in the water. Thank you Lord! To be in a surgery waiting room at the hospital and have friends from church sitting and praying with you. Thank you Lord! "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," thank you Lord!

Last Sunday was Pentecost, remembering how the Spirit empowered the early church to go and tell others about the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. Those disciples had to tell others, they couldn't be quiet. I heard about how the Spirit was present here last Sunday; because people had to say something to me, they couldn't be quiet. In the story of Jesus healing the blind men from this week's daily lectionary readings, the men had to tell others, even though Jesus told them not to tell. The men, by their being able to see told others that something marvelous had happened, they didn't need to say anything. That is how it is supposed to be, our lives manifest our relationship with God. I had a member of the church tell me how

she has a prayer group at work and the difference that is making for the people she works with on a daily basis. She just felt called to pray together each day so she asked her co-workers if that would be okay. She was guided by the Holy Spirit. . Our lives manifest our relationship with God.

When I was younger, I wanted to play the trumpet, but no one would let me because I was a girl. A friend from church appeared at my door two years after I had expressed to her that I wanted a trumpet. Her brother had gone to college and left his horn behind, did I want it? I accepted her gift. I believe that she was guided by the Holy Spirit.

Each of us has been touched by the Spirit through someone else; the Christian term is “a moment of grace in our lives.” I’ve just listed a few instances of moments of grace. Take a moment and think about a time in your life when someone from church has touched your life, when you experienced “a moment of grace.” When you leave today I encourage you to share that experience with someone else, just mention it. That would be called witnessing; I know we Episcopalians don’t do that! But try it anyway.

Being church is being in relationship with God. When we gather for worship, when we meet for bible study, pastoral care, outreach to our community or having dinner and dancing, (having fun), we are expressing God’s love to each other and the world. When we trust each other enough to say, “I need to talk with you” and then express a concern in our lives, that is God’s love active in the world. Trinity Sunday is about relationships, the relationship of love between God, Jesus and the Spirit. It is also about our relationship with God and each other. It is about being open to God’s love, knowing that we live and move and have our being in God.