

Trinity, Year A

May 18, 2008

RCL

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Canticle 13

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

The Rev Susan H Russell

All Saints Episcopal

Church

Blessings on this Trinity Sunday. Three is the number of the day, and one. One God in three persons, the triune nature of the one true God, trinity in unity.

For us every opening prayer, every collect, ends with a three-in-one formula, every week. Usually it goes like this: we pray to God “through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.” For today it’s a little different : “Bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father: who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

We do the best we can to express this one-in-three-ness within the constraints of language. But our words are so limiting. It has been said that what we realize when we stop to look carefully at the trinity is how impossible it is to do God justice by talking about God.

In the words of T.S. Eliot, who knew a great deal about using words and also about faith in God, “words strain, crack and sometimes break under the burden, under the tension, slip, slide, perish, decay with imprecision, will not stay in place.”

Words are inadequate in the face of the majesty and mystery of God, but having said that, I am going to use the best ones I know of for the next 8 or so minutes to attempt to get at what this Trinity in Unity means for us today as we seek to worship God more deeply and to serve God here on earth. Bear with me.

One thing that I believe we mean by “these three are one” is that God is not alone, never has been alone. In the beginning, when the world was created, according to our reading this morning from the book of Genesis, when God created the heavens and the earth, a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Wind – *ruach* in Hebrew, *pneuma* in Greek – the word that also means both breath and spirit. *Spiritus* in Latin. The Spirit of God was present from the very beginning.

And when God made the first thing – it was light – God spoke a word. Not “Let there be light” – that’s the way our translation reads, but in Hebrew God needed to speak just one word – “light.” אור *Owr* God spoke a word and there was light. And the Word, who later becomes flesh and dwells among us, is Jesus the Son. All of God was present when the world began and has been present throughout history and is present even now.

God is not monolithic, not single, not in solitude, definitely not stagnant. God is a community.

One of my favorite theological concepts is the one called *perichoresis*. It's a Greek word meaning, literally, 'dancing around.' I like to picture God dancing around. And in *perichoresis* the three persons of the one God dance around each other, in and out, round and round.

The part of God that creates, the part that redeems, and the part that sustains. No one of them dominates the others. None is suppressed by the others. All are equal, though they are different. All are needed for the whole. Each one elevates the others. All three dance together, radiating the love that holds them together.

This, of course, is our model for living in community. God is the model for how we are meant to live together, no one of us dominating, no one suppressing another, the gifts of all being elevated by the others, all important, all respected, all equal in God's sight. And all dancing, radiating the love that holds us together.

We had a great party on Friday night. I'm not sure exactly how many of us there were but 100 people signed up to come.

We had a lovely meal, provided by Leslie, the resident caterer (and, by the way, you can purchase the leftovers today for your dinner tonight in the kitchen after church). We were celebrating the parish's 55th anniversary since the ground was broken here to build All Saints.

Our parish hall looked beautiful thanks to Jim and Jane and to Sally and to many others who helped set things up. Ruthann and Ray spoke, sharing some of the history of this parish. Vestry members and former Vestry members did the dishes. It was a wonderful example of community. We danced.

Well, there wasn't room for all of us to physically dance, but our spirits danced happily, out of companionship and friendship and enjoyment and the ever-popular – good food.

I don't recall anyone dominating or suppressing. And I was glad that those attending willingly wore their name tags so our 8:30 group and our 10:30 might get to know each other a little better.

By the way, there will be another opportunity to mix when we have a combined worship service and picnic on one of the Sundays in June. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Community. What do the readings for today have to say to us about other aspects of community? We know that community means fellowship and fun. We practice that regularly. But what else does it mean?

Reading and meditating on the creation story this week has brought something else into focus for me. I wonder if you are as anxious about the state of our world as I am. There is so much unmistakable evidence now that this marvelous creation of God's, this world, is suffering badly because of the way we have lived here, especially we who live in plenty in the western part of the globe.

Ice is melting fast and the seas are rising, upsetting the balance which has sustained the earth for so long. And all it will take to reverse this fatal trend is for us to change our ways, to stop polluting the earth and the air and the water so much, to stop consuming natural resources at such a rapid rate.

There would be no difficulty at all if we all made an effort to change our habits, if the people of the world, like the model of the trinity, danced it together, each of us giving something up, in order to preserve the world for each other and for our children and their children. This, too, is what it means to be a community.

Of course, we can't just wait for everyone else to fall into line. The danger is too great and the time for doing something is too short. What we can do is to become a model for others. As a parish we can be a visible witness to this city and to the diocese and beyond by forging a plan to save energy and reduce pollution, and by adhering to the plan as a community because we are a community of love and we care for the world God created.

So, who's in? Who wants to be in on this? Step right up. We've already stopped using paper cups and plates at All Saints and we have those recycling bins in our parking lot. It's a start. There's more we can do, though. Who wants to dance? To be in community also means to work together, as God would have us work, to be the hands and heart and voice of Jesus in today's world.

This story of creation, the first one we encounter when opening the Bible to page one, is deceptive in its simplicity. Read it again, slowly, considering the amazing power of God to make out of nothing the heavens and the earth and the seas, and everything that lives in the water and on the land and in the air, and finally to make us, his children, in all our complexity.

It is a prayer to God, this story, a prayer of thanks for each wondrous aspect of this amazing world. And throughout God speaks the Divine Word as each new thing is created, and God stops to admire the work and to call it good. This earth of ours is good. It is in our hands by a sacred trust.

We experience the Trinity of God every day, as we encounter the One who is the Creator of all things seen and unseen, the Son who lived among us, and the Spirit who travels with us.

We are baptized as Jesus was, by water and the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus commissions his disciples to go out and do as he says to them, "Go and make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And remember," he says, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We live in this community of the Body of Christ in full knowledge that all of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer; Lover, Beloved and Love itself; Source, wellspring, and living water; or the One who made us, the One who loves us, and the One who travels with us – by whatever words we choose to use – all of God is with us always, to the end of the age.

May we follow the wonderful model of community in love that God in three persons provides us as we continue to dance in the sight of the triune God.

Thanks be to God.

Soli Deo Gloria