

TRINITY SUNDAY, YEAR B, MAY 23, 2021

In the life of the church, today is called Trinity Sunday, the only major feast devoted explicitly to a doctrine of the church. The whole notion of the Trinity sounds pretty abstract: God is three “persons” in one divine life, and we call this God “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” or “Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier or as St. Augustine said, Lover, Beloved and Love.”

But how can it be that $1+1+1=1$? Aren't we turning God into three gods? There is a Franciscan friar by the name of Richard Rohr who is a mystic and author and founder of an organization called Center for Action and Contemplation. He has written several books and in one of his books, *The Divine Dance*, he writes this about the Trinity. “When you think about trinity don't start with one god and try to explain it as three instead start as three and understand this as the deepest nature of the one god. In other words, God is a perfect communion between three – a circle dance of love.” The truth is the Trinity is about the closeness, the involvement of God in all of creation that is filled with paradox and mystery that overwhelm the limits of words.

But how Richard Rohr describes the Trinity captures it in a nutshell. It is a dance. In fact the Greek word used to describe the Trinity is perichoresis. Peri means around and choresis means dancing as in choreography. The image is God, Son and Holy Spirit as three dancers holding hands and dancing together. There's nothing dull and stuffy about that image. It's very lively and mystical.

You see, the Trinity is really all about how God relates to us and how we discover that relationship through stories. It's easy to say the Trinity is a dry technical doctrine but in reality it is a living breathing revelation about believing Christians telling their experiences, their ideas, their beliefs about God.

Now the early writers of the doctrine also understood that no words can fully embrace the mystery of God and that is why stories are so important for they reveal glimpses of God's nature and how God relates to us in this world. Perhaps one of the biggest problems we've had with the Trinity is trying to rationalize and intellectualize it when it really needs to be felt - here in our gut because that is where God reaches us because that's where stories touch us and embrace us. If you noticed there is no mention of the word trinity in the bible rather we have numerous stories how God has been revealed to us in the person of Jesus and the spirit. And no one story can tell it all.

It's also important to recognize that the Trinity describes how God, up until this point, has related to us. To be painfully honest, we do not even know if that is all there is to God. We just know that the Trinity offers us a glimpse of God's reality.

That's why the stories are so important because they fill in little bits and pieces and affirm not only how we but others have experienced God. Time and time again we read stories in the Bible about peoples encounters with God and we always find in those stories that God's self is known in ordinary moments and things.

Isaiah sees God on a mighty throne who redeems him to do God's work. In Paul's letter to the Romans, we see a new category of relationship; we are children of God and joint heirs with Christ. We hear of the Spirit who leads us, empowers us, claims us as the children of God. Paul is reassuring the people that the Spirit of God is alive in them and offers a new kind of freedom as God's spirit imbues us with God's life-giving love. And in

the Gospel of John we are told God has given us Jesus so we may find new life in him that doesn't condemn but embraces us with God's love.

So the doctrine of the Trinity is not only how God relates to us but how God calls us into relationship with one another. It is in that relationship that God calls us to see each other as true brothers and sisters and to see all of creation as an extension of God's love. Perhaps that is why Paul's prayer that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all" flows out of Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to live in peace which has grown out of the loving mutuality of the Trinity.

Now most of us, most of the time, tend to relate spiritually, emotionally, practically to one of the three persons more than the other two. Some people relate more to God as high, mighty and powerful, the creator of all that is; "immortal, invisible, God only wise," as the hymn says. We think of the Creator as God and Jesus as a good friend and the Spirit as that warm feeling one gets at sentimental religious moments.

Others of us center our faith on Jesus the Christ. We focus on the central story of Jesus' life, death, resurrection; we tend to think of the Creator in terms of the one whom Jesus called Father and the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ among us.

And still others of us gravitate by nature and inclination to the Holy Spirit. We long to feel God in our lives; we yearn for that nudge of the Holy Spirit to guide us in our daily walk. The Creator is a bit distant and Jesus of course died for us, but the Spirit fills our life now.

Each of these is an authentic way of experiencing and relating to God, but for a healthy spiritual life, balance is needed, and the doctrine of the trinity helps us keep our balance by reminding us of those aspects of God we do not easily see. The trinity reminds us that the God who created the universe is also the God who lived among us in the person of Jesus Christ and is the same God who nudges us and comforts us in our day-to-day lives. It is an ongoing dance

On this Trinity Sunday may the heart, mind and spirit of God permeate our beings so we can join this eternal dance of the lover, beloved and love now and always. Amen.