

GRACE CHURCH
The HOLY TRINITY - YEAR B (RCL)

Honesdale, PA
16 May 2019

Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22-31
Psalm 8
Romans 5: 1-5
John 16: 12-15

THREE in ONE And ONE in — WHAT?!?
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Overheard in the Wayne Memorial elevator the other day:

“Man, I woke up last night just thinking about the Holy Trinity”
What’s that about?”
“Wow. I don’t know. A mystery!
How’s the cafeteria coffee?”
“Not bad.
You know about the 9:00 meeting?”
“Yeah. I have to get some paper work done first.”
“What about Donahue in 310?
I think we’ll have to make some decisions.”
“That Holy Trinity thing?”
“Yeah. Maybe later.”

When it comes down to it, we have to be honest -
have you ever *really* thought about the Holy Trinity?

Sadly, there have been *way* too many throughout history
who have tried, unsuccessfully to explain the mystery.
And in the course of the early years of Christian faith,
some even lost their heads or were burnt at the stake because of it.

So, let me tell you about Modalism, Arianism, Partialism
and the Church-wide Councils of Nicæa, 325 AD and again in Chalcedon in 381AD.
Nah! Maybe not.

But if you’d really like a chuckle,
Google “LutheranSatire.com and St. Patrick’s Bad Analogies,”
where Patrick tries to explain the Trinity to these two Irish dudes.
I toyed with the idea of setting up a projector and showing the cartoon
and be done with it.

“We don’t get where you’re coming from there, Patrick.”
It is the feast of the Holy Trinity,
when most wise priests assign their underlings to preach -
curates, seminarians, deacons-in-training -
just to see if they can cut the muster
with the interminable problem of trying to explain
that we have one God, but three persons.

It is a core issue of our doctrine - if Episcopalians have any such crises.
The profession of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity
is required in all our rites and ceremonies,
from Baptism to Ordination
and even in our Burial Rites we proclaim the ancient Creed.
The doctrine is also used as a basis for our relationships
with other Christian bodies for full inter-communion.

I also toyed with simply reading the sections of the Catechism
found in the back of the Book of Common Prayer,
the sections on God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit
and be done with it.
But while pondering the Catechism I thought about the sacraments of the Church -
and how God in however many parts work in and through them.
We state that we believe there are seven sacramental rites
which motivate the faithful with God:
Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage,
Penance, and Holy Unction.
But The Catechism also states that God does not limit Godself to those rites;
they are simply patterns of countless ways by which God reaches out to us.
And yet we try to limit God to these seven.

And we limit God further into a Trinity of existence:
God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.
But these terms have become restrictive to many
especially when in the 21st century we are supposed to be more enlightened
and open to new concepts of eternal truths and human experience.
We speak of God creating us mortals in *his* image -
we limit God to a male image,
and then re-create God in *our* image.
We call that anthropomorphism -
making God in *our* image
rather than the other way 'round.
God with hands, and beard and white robe and... well.
Not too many years ago someone asked me how I would describe God to a four-year old;
he thought he failed,
because now the child thought there was this scary old man
with long white hair and a beard and flowing white robe
watching everything we do.
Yeah, that's probably not the way I would go.
This terrible Judge on High!

I certainly don't want God to be in *my* image.
I don't want my God to be limited to my simple minds' apprehension.
I believe God to be greater than what human minds have concocted over the centuries.
Because God is a mystery - a wonderful, exciting mystery.

Nowadays, many in the Church try to broaden imagery of the Trinity
as Creator
Redeemer
and Sanctifier.

So rather than trying feebly to explain what one friend describes as
“Dad, Junior and Spook,”
I'd like to offer the new Trinity of God's action:
Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier
and ask these questions for each of us to ponder.

How can we act as God the Creator?
Can you work in God's kingdom
as one who creates rather than destroys -
lifting up rather than tearing down,
offering positives in the face of negatives,
hope in the face of despair -
order out of chaos?
God does.

How can we act as God the Redeemer?
offering forgiveness,
teaching love,
healing the broken,
sacrificing yourself?
Can you help to redeem God's Creation -
human, animal, vegetable, mineral?
Jesus did!

And that leads to the Sanctifier, or as others term the Holy Spirit - God the Sustainer.
(I like “Sanctifier” myself, but then I'm an Anglo-Catholic priest.)

While I hinted subtly at a redeemed and sustainable society in God's image,
we speak of the Holy Spirit of God sustaining us on our journey
thought this part of life until we reach our final destination
God's perfected Garden of Paradise.

So, I bring us back to the Sacraments.
(See how easy it is to avoid preaching the doctrine of the Trinity?!)
To un-quote the Catechism,
“God does not limit Godself”
God will not be limited
for the seven sacraments generally recognized are simply,
“patterns of countless ways by which God reaches out to us.”
“Sacraments,” the Catechism continues, “sustain our present hope
and anticipate its future fulfilment.”

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The Holy Trinity really though, just boils down to:
God at the beginning,
God in the middle of it all,
and joyfully, God at the end.

God does not limit God.
And neither should we.

AMEN.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

a Fathers' Day observance

hand each child a card with blanks to fill in:

My Dad

Likes to:

Can (do what?):

Can't (and it's OK):

Should:

Shouldn't:

IS:

THE B e s t E v e r