

Trinity Sunday
May 27, 2018
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Love in Communion

In the name of the Holy One, the Holy Three, Amen.

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday, an opportunity to embrace the power of our creative God, the sacrificial love of the Son, and the life giving breath of the Spirit. The Trinity is for most, difficult to understand or explain. Many opt to give this Sunday to their seminarians to preach. Why didn't I think of that?

For centuries, theologians have attempted to define the mystery of the Trinity through doctrine. But rather than a set of beliefs, we can experience the Trinity as relationship. It begins with the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and expands to the relationship of the Triune God with all of creation. Trinity Sunday celebrates this encounter of the eternal with humankind, a dynamic connection of intimacy and unity. Through our baptism we are empowered by this Holy threesome to reach out to a hurting world with unconditional love.

If we go back for a moment to the Pentecost event we heard about last week, I think it gives us some context. The disciples gathered together still in secret, for fear of the persecution that awaited Christ followers. When the promised Holy Spirit descended upon them, like the breath of God in Genesis, they were given new life. Literally inspired by God's creative love, over three thousand people were baptized into the kingdom of God that day, and the church was born. Just like when Jesus was baptized, filled with the Spirit and thrust into the wilderness, so too, those followers of Christ who became the church, were empowered and sent into a hostile world. The Church was to share God's unconditional gift of love to the ends of the earth.

This experience of empowerment was given to Isaiah and his response to the encounter with the Holy was "Send Me!" This empowerment was exactly what Jesus explained to Nicodemus when he spoke of being born from above. Nicodemus, a religious leader and teacher of the law, came to Jesus in the dark of night, hungry to know more about this eternal life Jesus taught. Jesus challenged him to a new life of faith, not simply of intellectual assent to certain propositions, but to a visceral way of living out faith in relationship. To have eternal life as Jesus explained it, did not mean endless duration of existence, but a life lived with the unending presence of the triune God. Being born anew into eternal life enables us to live God's unconditional love and gives us courage to share it.

Perhaps this story of Nicodemus, who was already part of a faith tradition, yet still hungry for meaning and purpose resonates in your heart. If your life of faith has been reduced to rote prayers and practices held together by a belief or two, today's scripture offers a second chance of renewal. God creates us anew, again and again as we encounter and share God's love. When the Spirit bound those disciples together to be a community, they were transformed from fear stricken individuals to a force of love and service that could change a dangerous world.

It reminds me of yet another community who serves in the face of danger and have given their lives for greater purposes. On this Memorial Day weekend, we pause to reflect upon those sacrifices made on our behalf for freedom and peace. Having been raised in a military family, I experienced first hand what soldiers give up in service to their country. While there was not

always a spiritual foundation to their service, each member of this community knew the sacrifices inherent in putting individual needs aside for the greater good.

As global nomads, home was not a place, but the people who accompanied us in the journey. We were a community where connections were strong, extending our hearts if only for a little while. So far from home, it's easy to imagine soldiers feeling alone and comfortless, yet it was the love they shared that often kept them alive. Standing by each other, giving encouragement and hope, God's love was made visible in their care for one another.

Perhaps this Triune God is not contained to just religious communities but shows up wherever the power of love is extended to one another. Theologian John Zizioulas wrote that the Holy Spirit is revealed to us and known through what the Spirit brings about in us. The energy of the Spirit move us to self-transcendence and initiative to reach towards one another, from solitariness to community. Evidence of the Holy Spirit is in the fruits of our lives in very practical ways; in more patience and gentleness of heart, more joy in our journey, more peace in our troubles, and more love and concern for others.

If you are Episcopalian, no, truth be told, if you are breathing, you probably heard about the royal wedding last weekend. Our presiding Bishop gave the homily and talked about the power of love to change us and to change the world. God has poured out the power of the Trinity among us so that bound together in love, the Church may become hope to a world that so often feels hopeless. Equipped and called God sends us to the ends of the earth. As the body of Christ all that we do is to be shaped by the pattern of love-in-communion that exists in the Trinity. I pray that the power of the Trinity be made visible in us in our care for one another. And I pray that this love will embolden us to say "Send me!"

I would like to close with a prayer I found called The Prayer of Nicodemus, "God of second chances, who is patient with our confusion and who leads us into greater understanding if only we have ears to hear and souls willing to search; grant that we may be born anew each day into hope, born anew each day into joy, born anew into your realm. When we become legalistic in our living, teach us the language of forgiveness. When we become concrete in our thinking, lift us into the ways of your Spirit. When we become stuck in religious patterns that lead us away from you, bring us back to living faith. May your grace become the context of our days." In the name of the Holy One, the Holy three, Amen.