

“The Question of Trinity”
The Holy Trinity – June 16, 2019 – John 16:12-15/C

The question for today is simply: So what? For those of us who refer to ourselves as Christians, believing in Jesus Christ is the answer to almost every question. But to believe in God as One in Three or Three in One (persons or expressions) seems so “old school.” And as a matter of fact, it is. This idea comes to us through ancient Scriptures, ancient traditions and ancient ways of believing that often seem out of touch or even unrelated to our lives these days. And so, I repeat, the question for today is simply: So what?

Today is the festival of The Holy Trinity – a doctrine of the Church.

We all know that a doctrine is defined as “a belief or set of beliefs held by a group of people.” Yet, we can’t even explain God! It is, in Latin, *Mysterium Tremendum*, or, a tremendous mystery, so how can we hold a belief about something we can’t know? Or in fact, how can we live in an unanswered question?

Our liturgical calendar tries to help, by sandwiching our green seasons - the ones that focus on us and the growth of our faith - between the white festivals of Epiphany, Transfiguration, Holy Trinity and Christ the King. Revealing. Glorification. Trinity. Jesus our King. God seems to want to use any tools available to show us how our life fits into the open God Question. How our life in worship asks questions about us during the long, green season of Pentecost, but is always bookended by festivals that point us back to God.

And we certainly all “experience” God in various ways: Last Sunday, we heard the Pentecost story in Luke second book that we know as Acts. It describes the coming of the Holy Spirit with tongues of fire and wind, with power of hearing and speech, and with new inspiration for the disciples. Today in John’s Gospel, Jesus speaks of the coming of the Spirit among “many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” His promise of the coming *Paracletos*, (Greek word for Spirit, which means comforter) paints a very different picture and experience of how the Spirit comes to us. Which Pentecost story do you prefer? Which description of the Holy Spirit are you most drawn to? Do you experience God as power or comfort – or does it depend on your circumstance at the time?

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity was the early Church’s attempt to address people’s incredibly diverse experience and images of the God they encountered personally. We, too, know God when we feel God’s presence. And we certainly know when we feel God’s absence. I can’t count the times someone has come to me and shared, ‘Pastor, I’m afraid I’m losing my faith. I have doubts...I have questions.’ Where did we get the idea that doubt was a negative process, or that questions should be measured on the “stupid” scale? For that matter, who said the Bible was a book of **Answers**, when we all (should) know it is a book of **Questions**?! When did we embrace the idea that not being able to find an answer on our own meant that there was no answer at all?

And where did we get the idea that God promised us (or owes us) answers? I don’t believe that Jesus ever said, “Follow me and I’ll answer all your questions.” What Jesus did say was, “Come, you who are weary and I will give you rest.” And he said, “Those who drink of Living Water will never be thirsty again,” and “I am with you always, even until the close of the age.” What the Bible says about the Holy Trinity offers us different points of entry:

Genesis 1 – In the beginning (when) GOD created...the Spirit was there, hovering over the waters at Creation. And, according to John's Gospel, Jesus was there as well! John 1 - *In the Beginning was the Word (that's Jesus!) and the Word was with God and the Word was God...(and the Word became flesh...)*

The Holy Spirit dove and the Father-God's voice were both present at Jesus' Baptism by John in the River Jordan.

That same Jesus, hanging on the cross of death on Calvary, spoke to God saying, "*Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit.*"

The Spirit of God was working a new creation in that Easter morning Resurrection of a lifeless Jesus; raising him from death and sending him home to the Father. Yes, they are all there, all the time – Three in One; One God in Three Persons.

So what, you say? Well, in my mind Trinity is, in some sense, a story-telling device. It doesn't matter where you enter; you may hear different points at different times; relate to different characters in different situations. But there will always be an expression of God that is there, reaching out to invite you into a relationship where you are most comfortable.

It doesn't matter if you have ideas you can't understand. None of us knows how to answer the questions like: Did God die on the cross? If Jesus died to take away the sins of the world, why do we keep sinning? If God's loves us so much, what are we doing here?! Questions that are as old as the world. Questions with no answers. And we don't like Questions with No Answers. Because we want to think ANSWERS give us some control over things for which we have no control, but Answers often cut off the conversation, stop the debate or get in the way of us learning something new.

Questions keep us wanting to know more about the God who is **not us**. Questions **feed** our souls in ways that resolutions, answers do not. Faith itself feeds on open Questions and where we are open, the Spirit can and will fill us.

One day Saint Augustine was walking along the beach, puzzling over the Trinity, when a little child ran past him with a seashell filled with water, and poured the water from the ocean into a hole he'd dug in the sand.

"What are you doing?" Augustine asked the boy.

"I'm trying to put the ocean into this hole." The boy replied,

"It cannot be done!" declared Augustine, to which the boy said,

"No more than the answer you are seeking can be found!"

That's when St. Augustine realized he had been trying to put an infinite God into his finite mind. **An ocean into a hole!** He was searching for Answers instead of seeking God!

So what? Well, this God will never stop searching for us. Not ever. This God comes for you in whatever way you need his love. And I promise you, God does love you. No matter what.
Amen.

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