

Trinity Sunday A

Today as on every year on Trinity Sunday I try and say something relevant about the fact there seems to be three aspects of one God, or, as it is often put, three ways of thinking about God. I can use examples such as reminding you that H₂O is steam from boiling water as well as flowing water and, hard ice. The same chemical formula but different properties. Or I could invite you to describe an egg. You would probably say it consists of a shell surrounding the yolk and the albumin. Three different parts which together give us an egg. Many things come in three parts from a family unit of father, mother, child to thinking of a human as having a body, mind, and spirit. You may see yourself as being a child then a spouse and then a parent or in other ways. Thus, we recognize that many things can be thought of as being a part of a trio. So why does it seem hard to think of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be the trio or Trinity that is God? I read that John Wesley provided the thought, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God."

Knowing that I could of course have just thrown in the towel and said – no sermon today as it is impossible. But let me try to dwell in other ways on the Trinity. Certainly, we can reflect on the three names it offers, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although I try hard not to give God any gender it is hard to escape from the use of the word "father" as it appears in our liturgy so many times. We have prayed to God as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," three times already in the liturgy today. While people have spoken about seeing God as Mother and thought of the maternal qualities God exhibits, the name "mother" is rarely used in our liturgies. But this does not prevent you from thinking of God as a mother figure, if that is a good image for you.

Staying with "father" as it is immersed in our liturgy, when you say "father" what are you thinking? Are you seeing God as a human parent? If your father was a loving man, kind and compassionate does that help you see God as father? What if your father was difficult to live with or abusive or an alcoholic or mostly absent? Does knowing a loving God help replace the sort of father you wished you had?

But you can also think of God the Father as the creator. Fathers with mothers create children and by so doing become parents. In our first reading we understand God as creator, and as the creator of wisdom which was God's first creative act. You do need to remember it is theology not science which is being written. The writer having proclaimed God created wisdom first continued with all the other activities of God involved in the creation of the world. The writer emphasizes where God had delight, that is, in the creation of the human race. When you think of God in creation you are more likely to think of the story in the first chapter of Genesis. The author of this chapter wrote how God created a world in an orderly manner, using a day by day description of the task. His emphasis lay on the sixth day the sixth day which gets the greatest detail and most of that is on humanity. The same words for the blessing of the birds and all the creatures of the sea are used for the blessing of the male and females God created. God blessed them all and said to them all, be fruitful and multiply. Of course, the instruction

for humanity to have dominion over all other non-human creatures can be a challenge. You note there is nothing about any human being having dominion over another. You could see this dominion as an opportunity to exploit, or you could understand it as an instruction to be a good steward and care for all creatures of God's creation so that all can thrive and be fruitful and multiply. Seeing God as creator and understanding God as the loving father of creation I hope seems an easy concept. I really love being out walking and I love to pray and walk too. Being or looking outside at the beginning or the end of the day when the sun is rising, or setting is also a wonderful place to be. Watching a waterfall, sitting beside a stream, looking at the sky amass with stars, all remind me to thank God the creator.

I am sure one reason why being a Christian is what I want to be and is how I want to know God is because of Jesus Christ and my relationship with him. It is because I know Jesus and see in him an example of how to live my human life, by loving God, respecting the dignity of all others, caring for others, loving my neighbors, all of them, as I love myself. Have you thought why you are a Christian? As Christians we have one gift no other religion offers. We have Jesus, often called a personal savior. Jesus came to earth to live with us and for us and to show us how to live the way God intended. As we know from John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that all who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life." So, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity is the one who you can know in so many ways. He is your savior, your Lord, your friend, your teacher, your leader, your healer. He is presented as both the sacrificial lamb and the Good Shepherd who cares for all lambs and sheep. Jesus lived a human life, setting an amazing example of one who cared who all who were needy; healing a great many of them and raising some from the dead, feeding large numbers of them rescuing them in a storm, teaching them how to live and his intention was for them to have "abundant lives." He stood up for what was wrong, how God's laws were being badly distorted and because he would not back down from challenging the religious authorities, they determined to kill him. But despite them crucifying him he showed that God has power over death and raised him to life. This is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity.

Creation is apparent, Jesus lived and died. Christians believe Jesus Christ was resurrected and thus the Church was born. But the Holy Spirit; he or as I prefer, she, can be a challenge. Who is she? Where does she come from, what does she do, how does she change your life? These are just some of the questions you could ask. The Holy Spirit was the gift of God to Jesus' disciples to be their guide, comforter, advocate, friend, supporter to name the most obvious roles. Paul reminds us that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." Jesus had told his followers he would not leave them orphaned but send them the Holy Spirit. I see the Holy Spirit as the essence of God here with me, to direct me, to help me support me. If you think of that painting by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel there is God depicted as offering his hand to Adam, who is reaching for it. Adam is still there reaching for God, but the Holy Spirit will come right to you if you reach out for her. She will then guide you, befriend you, help you and comfort you. It is her presence

I feel day by day, that essence of God. When life is hard, I know the Holy Spirit is with me to guide me.

In an insightful book, "Where love is, there God is also" by Leo Tolstoy, there is line by one of three hermits who live alone on an otherwise deserted island. A visiting Bishop asks them about their spiritual lives thinking they need teaching. The one hermit tells him they pray, "You three have mercy on us three." If they knew this, they did not need other teaching although the Bishop had other ideas. I have the little book, but it is now packed, of course!

"You three have mercy on us three," you three: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, can be your prayer- imagine two people you know with you and say it on behalf of the three of you. Think of Your friends who are African American and pray it with them in your heart. Pray it for all who are racist and ask for God's mercy on them to change their hearts. Pray it for those who feel called to go and protest about racism and join us on Friday for our Juneteenth remembrance. Pray it for our leaders who are making decisions which affect us all. Keep praying, especially at this time of crisis in our country, reeling from seeing again the violence of January 6 last year. Pray for our world, for the Ukraine of course but also for the people of Afghanistan, for Lebanon, for Ethiopia and all other nations where starvation and/or war are ongoing. Pray for all who are angry, who are suffering, who are sick, who are in despair. Just keep praying.

God whom we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit have mercy on us all; forgive us our sinfulness. Help us each day to respect the dignity of all persons. Help us to know and understand that you intentionally created this diverse world with people of many different colors, speaking many different languages and with different ways of knowing and worshipping you. Help us to understand you love each person you created equally, that we are all your children and equal in your sight.

Lastly our God, help us to live as Jesus the Son taught us, by loving you and our neighbors as we love ourselves. Amen.

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."