

Trinity Wonders

What do you think about when you think about God?

What is the character of God?

Who does God care about?

Perhaps more to the point, how does God care?

Where might we look to catch glimpses of God in our world?

Is God the ultimate meaning of all things?

Or is God simply a projection of my own wishes and desires?

These are just a few of the questions the church invites us to sit with on this very unusual feast day; for today is Trinity Sunday.

Most Sundays focus on the teachings of Jesus, while Trinity Sunday is the only day we celebrate a doctrine of faith.

Boring?

Perhaps!

But before you start scrolling through your phone, give me a moment to convince you that what we celebrate today really does matter.

A lot!

Many folks over the years have taken stabs at how to help us think about the Trinity.

Others simply throw up their hands and say forget it!

After all, how do you get One God in Three Persons, but still One God?

My dear friend, Fr. Frank Chun, talks about the Trinity from the standpoint of mangos.

The mango is a single piece of fruit, made up of skin, flesh and pit - three parts, one fruit.

Others point to water.

It can be liquid, steam or ice.

Each water, but with different characteristics.

Still others mention Uncle Charlie Kokubun, pointing out that he is an uncle, a husband and a friend.

One man, who relates to others, in three different ways.

Several years ago, a book called the Shack was a best seller.

It's about a fellow who suffers a terrible tragedy and then comes face to face with the Holy Trinity.

In the woods.

At a cabin.

God the Father is a heavy set African-American woman who loves to cook.

Jesus is a blue-jean wearing twenty-something longhaired hippy.

The Holy Spirit is a wispy girl who comes and goes as she pleases.

Funny thing.

All three have nail holes in their wrists.

On the flip side of these popular examples is St. Augustine's 17 volumes dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

Not to mention Karl Barth's 1400 pages entitled "The Doctrine Of God."

But it is St Thomas Aquinas, the author of countless books about the nature of God, who really catches my attention.

As he lay dying, reflecting on his lifetime of insight, analysis and exploration, he's given a glimpse beyond the veil that hides from us the mystery of God.

And that glimpse makes him realize:

"Everything I have written — is straw..."

When it comes to wondering about the Trinity, take whatever example you like!

Be it mangos or Shacks or the most complex theology.

But whatever you choose, don't hold onto it too tightly.

Just hold it — lightly.

Realizing that just as we cannot find words for our deepest feelings of love, so, in the end, words can never contain the mystery that is God.

The Master says to his students: "God is unknown and unknowable."

"Then why do we seek God," they ask?

The master replies:

"Does the bird sing to say something — or does the bird sing because it has a song?"

We seek the unknowable Mystery because that very Mystery plants in us a song to sing.

So that in the singing, something of the ultimate Mystery may tenderly reveal itself to us.

At the end of the day, words fail.

Only quiet wonder remains.

You won't find the word "Trinity" anywhere in the Bible.

But it's hinted at.

Not only in the newer testament, but in the older one as well.

We hear it today in the song of Wisdom.

She exists from the beginning.

She says in her own words,

"I am daily God's delight, rejoicing before him always ... and delighting in the human race."

Just so, when we listen in on the murmurings of the Trinity, it is laughter and joy that come bubbling out.

Meister Eckhart says that the Father laughed, and the Son is born.

The Father and Son laugh together, and the Spirit is born.

And when all three laugh, humanity is born.

Because the purpose of creation — is joy!

And our destiny is to become transformed — so that we might live that joy!

Perhaps that's the insight of St. Paul this morning.

Recognizing that transformation comes as we each of us struggle with our own issues, our own demons.

To let go of the certainties and prejudices and resentments that keep the door to joy closed.

Paul knows from bitter experience that such transformation comes only at a great price.

And yet in paying the price, he comes to see that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint..."

If you say "yes" to this God who is One in Three and Three in One, expect the ride to be bumpy.

And change may come quickly or it may come slowly.

But you will be changed.

Because there is just one guarantee in life.

God wins!

Don't take my word for it.

Look at St. Peter.

He started life fishing for ahi and ended his life founding the church in Rome.

Or Paul.

That ramrod straight Jew who left it all behind to tell the world about a God who so delights in humanity as to become one of us.

This God who is crucified — by the best and the brightest.

Yet, who walks out of the tomb three days later with these three words on his lips:

"I love you."

Living into the mystery that is the Trinity is something like living in a marriage.

Once the wedding lights have dimmed and the hot-blooded passion cools, we come to realize that we're in for something much tougher, and yet far deeper and more profound, than we ever dared to imagine.

Because the union of two persons is a foretaste of the union that awaits all of creation.

The great prayer of Jesus is that we all of us be one — as God is one.

Which begs the question:

How is God one?

This Trinity Sunday, we are invited to quietly sit in the truth that God is One in Three.

Three in One.

That "ultimate reality" consists precisely of "unity in diversity."

Which is a sorely needed reminder these days, when so many fear diversity!

If we are called to be One like God is One, then perhaps we are to look around at all of creation.

Not only at the vast differences among Christians.

But to look as well to our Jewish siblings and Muslim brothers and Buddhist sisters and Hindu cousins and non-believers too, and see that we are all of us part of a grand and glorious orchestra!

An orchestra that is, in ways we may never completely comprehend, giving glory to the living God.

Perhaps our Pentecostal friends, who sing and shout and speak in tongues, are the flute section.

Perhaps Anglicans and Catholics are the sturdy bass section, with Evangelicals taking up the cymbals and the drums.

Perhaps our Muslim friends are the long trombones, with Buddhists making a beautiful noise upon their violins.

Perhaps in the same way that the people of Babel were scattered because they sought to reach the heavens with one voice, so too we today are scattered, so that in the humility of our differences, we might find in one another, the unity that harmonizes with the diversity that is God.

So this morning, can we sit quietly before the Holy Trinity?

Holding the paradox of "unity in diversity" in our hands?

Perhaps there, we might find a doorway into the deepest mysteries.

Mysteries that beckon us to discover, especially in those who differ from us, the song of God.

Mysteries that reveal the joy of loving and respecting each other, because of our differences.

Isn't that precisely where God's sublime beauty — is at long last revealed?

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