

Relationship with the Trinity

Trinity Sunday, Year A

June 19, 2011 – Father’s Day

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

In addition to being Father’s Day, today is Trinity Sunday. It is a unique Sunday in the church as it is the only one based on a Doctrine. It is a doctrine that developed over centuries while a new church was trying to articulate an authentic faith. It is a doctrine that developed out of the church’s relationship with scripture and their relationship with each other and in their own church cultures. They were trying to understand God – and isn’t that just like today? We have the modern movement to understand the humanity of Christ. We have the ones who like to figure out the date of the second coming.

There is no doubt about it. The concept of the Trinity can be a tough one to wrap our heads around. And the truth of the matter is, no matter how much we think about it, no matter how much we talk or perhaps disagree about it, we will never really comprehend its depth or complexity.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church defines the Trinity as: one God existing in three Persons and one substance, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is one, yet self differentiated; the God who reveals Himself to humankind is one God equally in three distinct modes of existence, yet remains one through all eternity.” The “Three persons” is what I think throws us off. The Personhood of the Trinity does not match the Western understanding of “person”. Our understanding of person implies an individual with their own distinct will. In the ancient society of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, personhood was never separate from community. John Zizioulas the Greek Patriarch and Theologian says about Personhood there can be no “I” without a “you”. The Trinity is all about relationships; relationships between the three **and** with us.

Relationship with God – this is my favorite sermon topic. So when we look at the Trinity though, who is our relationship with?

- Do you have a relationship with God the Father?

- Do you have a relationship with God the Son?
- Do you have a relationship with God the Holy Spirit? or...
- Do you have a relationship with all three at once?

The simple answer is yes! To all of the above. We can have a relationship with each member of the Godhead, or we may not distinguish between them and just have look to God. But my experience has shown me that we can meet each member of the Trinity. It isn't always something we seek. In fact each time I was not actually seeking God out – but God was reaching out to me.

So I would like to tell you about how I met God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And I brought some visual aids to help. I like to sew, especially church vestments and I now have three chasubles that represent each person of the Godhead.

God the Father: My Genesis Chasuble. This chasuble was made to depict the two creation stories in Genesis. The second one is different from the one we read today. It starts out with man being created in the image of God out of the dust of the ground, and then the animals to keep him company and then a mate. The second story of creation is about relationships: God with us; us with God, and our relationship to the earth.

This is God the Father, creator of heaven and earth. I met God the creator one night after a pesky evangelical was bothering me and my friends. I got fed up and went outside and sat under the stars. The scientist in me enjoyed looking at the stars – but soon I was going over the physics of the “Big Bang” and realized that the initial energy for that bang had to come from somewhere since energy cannot be created nor destroyed. It kind of dawned on me – was that God?

Anytime when I interact with creation – at the beach, in the rain, with squirrels, with flowers – I feel connected to God. It grounds me. It calms me – and I feel at peace.

I next met God the Holy Spirit. This is my red chasuble that I made for my ordination. It represents the Holy Spirit as the dove – but this dove is made out of the tongues of fire that fell on the disciples at Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit fell on Peter he went from a tentative and scared disciple to a powerful apostle who led 5000 to Christ with one speech. Christ told us not to worry about what to say – the Spirit will give us the words. And I have counted on that happening many, many times. I like to talk to the witnesses who go door to door. While talking with them I would often find myself going on about some aspect of scripture or theology and it's like I'm observing myself, because I'm thinking "where did I get this information?" Later I would find out that what I said had been correct.

There are many gifts of the spirit at work in the church: wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, and miracles. We do not see them too much in America's church because we tend to rely on ourselves more or just don't believe the gifts are around anymore. But the spirit is alive and active around the world and even in this country. I subscribe to the magazine *Charisma* and this magazine tracks the movement of the Holy Spirit in the world-wide church. For example – in Mozambique, people are being raised from the dead. In fact if you want to be considered for ordination – you have to have prayed for four people to be raised from the dead. But we don't even have to go that far. Up in Redding, California a revival is breaking out and people are being filled with the Holy Spirit and meetings and worship are going on almost non-stop. Anyone interested in a road trip?

It took me a long time to meet the next person of the Trinity. I kept putting it off too – I knew that once I met the Son of God my life would never be the same and I wasn't ready for that.

Finally, I met the Incarnate God - Jesus. For God to deny himself and become one of us was to me the most amazing thing. God became man to experience His creation, to live among us – to have friends – to reach out and help the outcasts and sinners – to serve others.....this is unparalleled and not found in any other religion. This is special and in understanding and accepting this I began a life centered on faith. But that is not all Jesus did. We know the story – we celebrate each year during Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Jesus died on the cross, paying the cost of my sins and defeating death. This is represented by my white chasuble. I made this one for my niece's wedding I officiated at a couple of weeks ago. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and Jesus endorsed this way of life by performing his first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. So making a chasuble for a wedding was very meaningful for me. The cross on it represents Christ's saving act at Calvary.

Today we all must try to do what the doctrine of the Trinity was originally formulated to do: give words to our faith. As Christians in the world, we must be ready to witness to others about what we believe and why we believe it. The early Christians, living in a hostile world, needed to put some definitive language to what they believed Christ had revealed to them. We need to do the same thing. The Trinity gives language to our strongest belief that our God is not merely a God of history, performing mighty acts only in Bible times, but a powerful, on-the-move God of the present and of the future. A God who is more than a Creator who made the world out of nothing, more than the God of the big-bang theory who began the universe and then left it to run on its own.

The words of faith, of what we believe, come from our relationship with God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Our experiences with God are unique to each of us. Sharing them with others will help us all see how big God really is. We will get to see something new about this God that we love. Sharing them with others will help build faith in those who are seeking God.

So if someone comes and asks you – why are you a Christian? What would be your story?