

Trinity A 2011

Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28: 16-20

Once upon a time
there was a holy bishop,
a man of God,
fervent, zealous --
a missionary.
He wanted to travel to the far reaches of his diocese,
he wanted to go
and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

So he set out across the sea in his little boat.

He determined along the way
to visit the three holy hermits
three brothers who lived all alone
on an island in the middle of the sea.
His flock had told him of the holy hermits
and he wanted to visit with them,
to be refreshed in their company --
and to assure himself --
simply for his own peace of mind --
of their orthodoxy.

So the bishop came to the island
of the three holy hermits.
Welcome, holy father,
they called to him from afar,
welcome in the name of God.
Come and break bread with us.
Come share the cup.

The bishop was pleased,
and came ashore.

At table with them,
he prepared to take the bread
and break, and bless it,
when, to his astonishment,
the three holy hermits began to pray.

The holy hermits lifted their hands,
they lifted their eyes to heaven,
and they prayed,
you are three,
we are three -- bless us.

The bishop was amazed;
he was horrified.
No, no, children!
is this how you pray?
You must say the Our Father,
you must bless yourselves
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

And so all through the night he taught them
and the holy hermits listened dutifully.
When he was satisfied with their progress
the bishop sailed away,
sure that he had saved the three holy hermits from error.

The bishop was gone for a year and a day.
He found disciples in many nations,
he baptized many
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

And at last he was ready to return home.
When he drew near the island of the holy hermits
the wind sat fair for home
and he decided to pass on without stopping
though he noticed, as he passed
that they waved to him frantically
from the shore.
He waved back and sailed on.

The bishop set his face for home.
But after a little he looked back
and there he saw
coming to him across the water,
the three holy hermits.

The three holy hermits --
walking across the water.

And when they came up to him,
the holy hermits stretched out their hands.
Please, holy father,
we cannot remember the words you taught us.
Please, teach us to pray.

But the bishop bowed his head
and said,
Children,
I beg you,
go on as you are;
pray as you have always prayed.

And so, ever after,
when they sat down at table,
the holy hermits would pray,
you are three, we are three,
bless us.

It's a mystery.
Holy and undivided trinity
uncreated, incomprehensible, eternal,
of one being.
We worship one God in trinity,
and trinity in unity,
neither confounding the persons,
nor dividing the substance. . .
it's mystery,
and we don't have to understand it to be faithful.

We don't have to understand it,
but as Christians we do proclaim it --
the God who made the world
is the God who became one of us
and is the God who will stay with us forever.

Because God made us in the divine image
because God lived our life
and died our death
because God keeps the world alive
by brooding over it and cradling it
and giving it breath,
we grow up trying to become
more and more like God.

And that means trying to make meaning
trying to give form
to formlessness
trying to comprehend,
to encompass,
to define.

We don't do it all that well,
but it's in our nature to try.
God made us that way.
And so,
through the centuries,
though it defies all common sense
and brings us to blows
and makes our sisters and brothers of other faiths
at best scratch their heads,
we continue to proclaim
that the God who is one
is three.

Creator, redeemer, sanctifier,
eternal majesty, incarnate word, abiding spirit,
Mother of all, divine Sophia, life-giving presence,
Mother, lover, and friend,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The development of the doctrine of the Trinity
makes a fascinating story.
The intellectual exercise required
of those who would follow all the arguments
is surely good for the mind,
and maybe even for the soul.
God made us as thinking creatures
and that means it brings us joy to think.

The doctrine of the Trinity
has demanded the best work
of some of the finest minds
God ever made.
We honor that today.

And we also say,
There is much that we believe,
much that we share with other faiths,
many ways to know God.

We believe that God is love.
We believe that God made us in the image of the divine.
We believe that God calls us
to respect the dignity of every human being.
We believe that God calls us
to a life that means something
a life that has a sense of purpose.
We believe that in a world that is both the same
and ever-changing,
God is always
unfolding new ways
and upholding old ways
for us to live in faith and hope.

We believe that the God who is impossibly distant
Is as close as our hearts.
We believe that the God who is utterly ancient
Is ever new.
We believe that the God who cannot be seen
Is most recognizable as one of us.
We believe that the God whose name is too holy to speak
Will answer when we call.

We have learned to call upon God as Mother.
We remember how to hear God in the wind,
we feel God as the rock beneath our feet.

We know the God
who remains with us through disappointment,
in anger,
at times of unbearable loss.
We have wondered where to find

The God who made the world,
When that world twists up homes and families in tornadoes
And shatters us in earthquakes.
We have faced moments
when we wonder if God is listening,
and some of us,
the moment
when we wonder
if there is any God there.

And then,
for some of us,
if we keep plodding down the road,
there comes again the moment
when we hear again
the tiny voice of God,
the still and silent voice of the God
who appears in a crackling flame,
the God who,
when pressed
will only say,
I AM.

Because God is, we are.
Because God lives, we live.
Because God made us
in the divine image,
as thinking, feeling, inquiring
passionate creatures,
we dare to think and talk
and quarrel about who God is.
We dare to say that God
is three in one.

And we dare to say, we rejoice to say,
you are three,
bless us.