

Trinity Sunday B 2021

Isaiah 6:1-8

Psalm 29

John 3:1-17

On this day,
Trinity Sunday,
I bring you glad tidings.

This glad tidings:
The doctrine of the Trinity
Is just what we need in these times.
Don't be fooled into thinking
It's obscure, confounding,
Or irrelevant.
And don't consign it to the past.
The history of its development
Is the story of real, passionate people
Engaged in a project of ultimate worth.

Even so, let's talk about now.
The doctrine of the Trinity,
Believe it or not,
Offers us a way
Into the land of wondering
That may refresh and inspire us.

At this moment,
After a year and more of pandemic suffering,
Of sickness and isolation,
Political turmoil,
And a great reckoning with the sin of racism in our midst,
At a turning point in our journey into exile,
And the beginning of our return,
We're looking, I think,
For comfort and hope.
I believe we can find some
In the mystery we celebrate today.

On this day
We confront the greatest mystery of our faith,
More mind-boggling even than the mystery
Of God incarnate in Jesus,
The gift of the divine living among us,
And within us,

As one of us.

This mystery:
As Christians,
We encounter the one holy and living God
In three separate and intertwined ways.

That's both simple and incomprehensible.
Unknowable –
And yet, we try to make sense of it.

There are many images
For the Trinity.
Among the most beautiful,
And most illuminating,
Are some from the earliest days of the church.

Images,
Especially,
Of water and sunlight.
The Trinity is like water:
The Creator is the spring welling forth from the earth.
The Redeemer is the stream running through the meadow.
The Holy Spirit is the seeping
Of the water into the ground,
So that life can spring forth.

The Trinity is like the sun.
The Creator is the sun itself.
The Redeemer is the sunbeam
Travelling towards the earth.
The Holy Spirit is the warming of the ground,
So that life can emerge.

These images never fail.
But in these times,
As we begin to return from exile,
And walk towards a life that must be rebuilt,
What other images of the unknowable,
Invisible, holy and undivided Trinity
Might guide, sustain, and empower us?

How might we speak of the Trinity now?
Because if this foundation of our faith
Does not offer us what we need now,
Then what is it good for?

If the foundations of our faith
Are distant and unimportant,
Then why do we continue to proclaim them?

I would claim this:
The Trinity, mysterious as it is,
Can be a source of comfort and hope.
Excitement and empowerment.

The Trinity is a community.
The Trinity is a dance.

This past year and more,
We have learned,
In new and poignant ways,
That we are, all of us,
Part of a web of community.
Some of us, early on,
Embraced the idea of the solitude
The pandemic brought us.
Others among us dreaded solitude –
Or isolation –
from the beginning,
And languished.
But for all of us,
I think,
And some of you have told me this is so,
We have discovered
Just how deeply we are intermingled
Not only with those we love,
But with all those
With whom we share the air we breathe,
And the ground on which we walk,
And the water that is precious to us.

We are bound together,
And we cannot disentangle ourselves.

God is just like that.
Or, if that sounds blasphemous to you,
Say it this way instead.
We, an interwoven web of living beings,
Are made in the image and likeness
Of the God who is, in essence,
A community.

A community has separate elements,
But it is only itself
In the union of those elements into a whole.

A community has members
With different strengths,
And gifts,
And character.
At their best,
They work together
To promote their own health,
And move beyond themselves
To offer gifts to the world.

A community is stronger,
More creative,
And more enduring
Than an individual.
Imagine this.
God is a community.

And God is a dance.

A dance is always a partnership.
It may be between an individual,
The music, heard, or unheard,
And the environment.

Or it may be all those,
And also a partnership
Between more than one dancer,
Inviting, requiring the individuals
To become something beyond themselves,
To be attuned and responsive to the other,
In order to make,
To participate in something of harmony and beauty.

God is a dance,
Interacting within the divine self,
Endlessly attentive to the others
As if to its own soul,
Constantly entering a space,
And transforming it,
Always responding to the music,
Heard or unheard.

The Trinity is a community
At harmony within itself,
Dancing through our lives,
Entering,
Enlivening,
And returning to its source.

We are made in the image of this God.
Born to be in community.
Born to enter into the dance
Where everyone is graceful,
Grace-filled.

That's two images.
There should,
Of course, be three.

So what would you say?
If you were to try to capture that mystery
In words that offer you,
In these times,
Comfort and hope,
Empowerment and joy,
What would you say?

This quest, to express the mystery that transforms our lives,
Belongs to us,
Just as it did to the first Christians
Who struggled to make sense
Of the bountiful blessing
That had turned their lives inside out
And upside down,
And made the world a possible,
Even a gracious place.

They looked for words
That would make this way of faith
Compelling rather than repellent.

We need new words now,
To bring the comfort and hope of faith
Into a time when it seems strange.

We have something precious to offer.
Our faith,
At its heart,

Has nothing to do with tired words
And worn out customs.

It has to do with encountering the hope of the world.
It has to do with trusting that good is possible.
Because the living source of life,
A community of self-offering love,
Is always dancing into our midst,
Taking our hands,
And inviting us to join the circle.

The Trinity is still mysterious.
But if God is anything like our hopes,
Then we can encounter that dancing community
Here and now,
Everywhere and always,
In all of our stories.

So what is your third thing?
Your story?
Your image?

There is always room for more to join the dance.
Whether you come by night or by day,
With questions or in silence,
There is a place for you,
And your story,
In the community of God.