

**God is Here: A Reflection on Trinity Sunday** Readings: Genesis 1-2; Mt. 28:16-20 Trinity A  
By the Rev. Karen Faye Siegfriedt; St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Atascadero CA 6/4/23

*(Using bubbles, demonstrate God the Father breathing into being: God's Creation, God's Word, and God's Spirit).*

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." *(bubbles)* "And the spirit of God was hovering over the waters." *(bubbles)* "So God created humankind in God's image...both male and female, God created them." *(bubbles)* "And God saw all that he had made and it was very good." *(bubbles)* [Genesis 1]

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *(bubbles)* [The Word] was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through this Word, and without the Word not one thing came into being. *(bubbles)* What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. *(bubbles)* The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. *(bubbles)* And we beheld His glory, a glory as of a father's only son full of grace and truth." *(bubbles)* [John 1]

Jesus said to his disciples: "Peace be with you. And when he said this, he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit." *(bubbles)* [John 20:21/22]

"Jesus came to his disciple and said: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *(bubbles)* And remember, I am always with you to the end of the age." *(bubbles)* [Matthew 28]

Today's is Trinity Sunday, the only Sunday in the liturgical calendar when we celebrate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God, three persons, all of the same divine substance. It is this doctrine of the Holy Trinity that is the subject of today's sermon.

I once heard a story about an elderly Bishop who was celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation in a parish in his diocese. The Bishop knew that he was losing his hearing, and really didn't like wearing the hearing-aids the doctors had given him, but he continued to do Confirmations anyway. He had been a Bishop for a long time, and he liked to ask the candidates questions about their knowledge of the faith before he did the Confirmations. He wanted to see if the candidates were adequately prepared.

At this particular Confirmation, the Bishop proceeded to ask his questions of the candidates, and he started with a question about the Trinity: "Who can explain our doctrine of the Trinity?" A young lady in the first row sheepishly raised her hand and answered: "The Trinity is our belief that there is one God, with three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The Bishop, because he wasn't wearing his hearing-aids, couldn't quite hear the young theologian's answer, and so he said, "I'm sorry, I don't understand what you said." The young girl responded, "It's OK Bishop, it's a mystery. You don't have to understand it to believe it."

While we cannot know the fullness of God, God is not a complete mystery because God has revealed God's self through creation, through the Holy Spirit, through the Word, and through the Word made flesh in Jesus the Christ. While the doctrine of the Trinity is not specifically mentioned in Scripture, it can be surmised by piecing together many passages throughout. Let's take a closer look.

The first person of the Trinity is God the Father, creator of heaven and earth. The only reason we can perceive God is because God decided to reveal God's self through the physical, created order. Many people experience the presence of God through nature, wildlife, and yes, even human beings. A few things I need to mention about God the Father. First of all, God is not a man. God does not have a gender. God is not the big man in the sky. God is not a person like you and me. In fact, it is against the second commandment to have a graven image of God because God is greater than any fixed image we might have. God is the ground of our being. God is the Divine Mind. God is the One in whom we live and move and have our being. God is the origin and chief architect of all that is visible and invisible.

The second person of the Trinity is God the Son. However, this does not mean that God the Father had a baby son and shipped him down to earth. I think the gospel of John best describes the second person of the Trinity as *the Word*. This Word of God did not originate with the physical birth of Jesus. In fact, this Word existed from the very beginning. In today's reading from the Book of Genesis, we read about God breathing God's Word into being resulting in the creation of the world. John says: "all things came into being through this Word, and without the Word not one thing came into being."

So if God the Father is the architect, God the Son (or the Word) is the builder who brings God's word into fruition. This Word of God shone forth through the created order billions of years ago and was spoken through the prophets long before the birth of Jesus. It then became incarnate in the person of Jesus. "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." [John 1] And while Jesus happened to be a man, and the Word of God became fully enfleshed in him, the Word of God (i.e. the Second Person of the Trinity) is not a man. Jesus however, is.

The third person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. This Spirit of God is the very Spirit "who leads us into all truth and enables us to grow into the likeness of Christ." (BCP 852) The Holy Spirit is an agent of transformation who transforms us into a new creation, renewing our minds and empowering us to live in accordance with God's will.

Now what I have described so far, is a very brief and simple explanation of the Trinity. If any of you have detected a heresy in my description, you can stone me later at coffee hour!

Seriously though, if you are sitting in the pews worried about your cancer diagnosis, or angry about an injustice done to you, or feeling hopeless about climate change, or struggling with family problems, or depressed over the condition of our world, then you probably don't really care about the doctrine of the Trinity. However, the Trinity is the expanded Christian understanding of God. And how we understand God in our hearts has a lot to do with how we live our lives today.

Belief in the Trinity acknowledges that all things have been made through the Word of God. As such we should treat mother earth with respect & tender care. Had we done that, our planet would never have gotten to the point of climate change and pollution. Belief in the Trinity acknowledges that God created us in the divine image. This means we recognize the sacredness and dignity of every human being. Belief in the Trinity is the confidence that the Holy Spirit can and does empower us, including transforming our resentments into forgiveness, our ignorance into truth, and our hard heartedness into compassion. Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (as well as the mouthpiece of God) means we will follow him as the way, the truth, and life, in accordance with God's will for us.

Remember, the early disciples did not sit around one day thinking that it would be a great idea to come up with the doctrine of the Trinity. They had always had a deep abiding relationship with YHWH. But once they experienced the person of Jesus, they saw in him a reflection of God that was so bright that they began to believe he was the Son of God. After Jesus was no longer with them, they continued to experience his Spirit in such a profound way that this Spirit transformed them from a place of fear and uncertainty to a posture of courage and conviction. And from these documented experiences of the early Christians, the doctrine of the Trinity began to emerge. At the core of this doctrine is the belief that God is here and has not left us on our own. God continues to reveal God-self on a daily basis, such that we can develop a personal relationship with God that makes us joyful, just, whole, and holy.

In closing, I would like to leave you with four thoughts:

1. God is not two men and a bird. The early Christian theologians used the word *hypostasis* or *person* to differentiate the Three. However, the word *person* in relationship to God is confusing to us and conjures up images of God that are just not true. Perhaps today we would use different words to describe the Trinity such as three distinct centers of consciousness being of the same divine essence.
2. God is a lot bigger than you are! That is why we have hope. Hope is the belief that the future holds new possibilities that are not evident in the present. So, hold onto hope and be joyful in the Lord.
3. God is here, not elsewhere. God did not leave St. Luke's when your last rector left. God did not leave this community of faith as its numbers shrank and members moved away or died. God is here, not elsewhere. And because God resides in each one of you, it is time to recognize your own divinity and to treat each other with love and respect. And because God is here, now in the present, it is time to let go of the past and to look forward to a surprising future filled with grace and truth.
4. Finally, if it isn't about love, it isn't about God. God is love and it is this love which ultimately makes this beloved community possible.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen!*