

The Rev. Dennis J. Reid
 A Sermon for Trinity Sunday, Year B
 St. Alban's Church, Sinking Spring, PA
 May 27th 2018

In the Name of God, the Undivided Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Ever since the very first day of Pentecost, part of the life of the Church has been to remain vigilant about what it professes to believe. Starting with the first Christians communities, then out to larger assemblies, to the churches founded and formed by Paul and the other disciples, and through the spread of Christianity throughout the world, at every step of the journey, people have come to learn, know, and believe that they themselves were taking their place in the sacred story of God, as brothers and sisters united in their faith in the One God of Israel shown forth through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We have come to know that this God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who created all things in the very beginning, the God who arrived on this earth as a helpless child, grew up, and was crucified on the cross only to be raised on the third day, the God who came down like wind, fire, and sacred breath on Pentecost, *this* God is found in three distinct persons, and *this* God is the *same* God; *this* God is eternal; *this* God is bound together in love, undivided and ever-living, almighty and victorious, a Holy Trinity of difference and unity and majesty and splendor.

And as we celebrate this feast of Trinity Sunday today, we might think that that's all there is to it. Three persons, One God. Yet this holy mystery has challenged the greatest minds of the Christian faith for 2,000 years. There have been countless Church councils, arguments, books, and sermons that have tried to best define and understand the nature of the Trinity -- most likely, all of them have failed. Or if not failed, have come up short. And that happens for a few reasons: first, it's really hard to talk about mystery. Purposefully difficult. Seriously, try it. When it comes to mystery or paradox or mind-bending truth -- there will not be many concrete things to say about it. Or think of some of Jesus' parables even -- they both reveal some part of the truth of God *and at the same time* cloud it over so that we'll keep thinking about it, pondering it as it continues to work on our minds and our hearts. The notion of a triune God works the same way.

Second, holy scripture is decidedly silent on the word "trinity." You can look all day for a mention of the word, and you won't find it. The closest you might come are certain moments that invoke the three persons of the Trinity, perhaps most memorable being Jesus' baptism, when the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father is heard from on high: "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Third, and perhaps for our purposes most importantly, we simply don't have the words necessary to describe and define the magnitude, depth, and breadth of God. It's not for lack of trying -- all of those words I started with come from our prayers, our hymns, and other sources throughout the Christian tradition by those faithful writers who have tried their best. But I hope this isn't something that brings us disappointment, for there are still plenty of ways in which we can grow in our understanding of the Trinity while still appreciating our almighty God who will always be on another level than we are, the God whose thoughts are not our thoughts, whose ways are not our ways, whose greatness is unsearchable.

So then, we do our best to learn *of* the Trinity and then, from what we can discern together as to the nature of God and how God acts, we then try to do the same. I might point us in the direction of relationship, that for all of the power and might and majesty that we rightly attribute to God, that the Holy Trinity of God is *different yet undivided* tells us a great deal about the love of God, about how we might look at our own relationships.

We have heard a lot about the love of God lately. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's now-famous sermon spoke all about it. One thing we may not have heard, though, is that love is not a simple platitude that exists on its own -- it is a powerful force, even stronger than the powers of sin and death. Love is the way of God, and because it is the way of God, it must be the way of God's people, too. And let us not confuse "liking" or "approving" of someone or something with "love."

Love is different. Love is unrelenting. Love is eternal. And this world's problems will not be solved with anything short of the eternal love of God that comes from the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, and then, through you.

God is love, and God is in relationship with all things -- within the Trinity there is relationship, too. In that relationship, there is deference, there is humility, and there is the notion of putting the other ahead of oneself. Christians learn to do this because our God is like this. That means Christians are in relationship with the entire world because the entire world is comprised of children of God, children made in the same image of God that you and I are. And if that's true, many more things are true. If that's true, it is also true that when we deride others, or come to see ourselves as better than others, we are deriding ourselves and God, because we are in relationship with each other and God. I have long said that one of the greatest temptations in all of life is not to see others the way we hope and believe God sees us -- and the way God sees us is always, always through the lens of love.

I'm afraid that doesn't make our relationships easier, though. Unlike God, there are plenty of times when our first instinct will not be love, and there will be plenty of times when we will not offer the same deference and humility towards others as God does within the Trinity, and there will be continue to be times (especially now) when we are divided because of a lack of love. But because God is undivided, the love of God reaches through our divisions and teaches us to love even those with whom we vehemently disagree. If we really believe everything Michael Curry preached about love, we cannot simply love those who love us or only love those who agree with us. We have taken vows and promised to do all that we can to be as close to the heart of God as we can -- as baptized people who are called to respect the dignity of *every* human being, we, then, as members of God's undivided family, we must offer God's love to the whole world, to every person, no matter who they are. The Episcopalians, the Evangelicals, the Roman Catholics, the Muslims, and the atheists. The people who voted as you did and the people who didn't. Your best friends and the people who annoy you. The 45th president and the 44th president. Whomever. When this is especially difficult, and there are times when you think you just can't do it, remember the Holy Trinity -- remember that the God we love is bound together in love and loves you, and then remember that God loves *that other person*, whoever they are, just as much as God loves you. And then remember that God asks you to do the same.

This is hard work -- in a way, it's nothing short of Godly work. Unless we look to God and look to show others the love of God, divided we will remain. But because you are connected to the holy and undivided Trinity of God and to one another, you are more than capable of showing that love to your neighbor, no matter who he or she is.

From its very beginning, the Church has known the love of God and been known the Holy Trinity of God. There is no division in God. There is difference, and there is unity, but there is no division. We have been created in that same image of God -- among us there is difference, and there is unity, and by prayer and relationship, we who are bound together with *all* of God's children, we who have been given the same spirit, we who have been adopted into the same family, and we who have been redeemed by the same Christ, we, as brothers and sisters in God, can work for a world where there is no division, but only love.

Amen.