

Trinity

Good morning!

Today is Trinity Sunday!

And most likely over many years you've heard sermons in church – and comments outside of church – about the Holy Trinity.

You've probably heard everything from the sublime to the ridiculous.

You've heard the Trinity is like a Neapolitan ice cream cone with chocolate, vanilla and strawberry: three flavors, one ice cream cone!

You've heard the Trinity compared to a mango: with peel, fruit and pit, yet one fruit!

These are examples of the sublime!

Perhaps you've also heard comments that the Trinity means God is schizophrenic, with multiple personalities; or that God is three co-equal gods.

These are examples of the ridiculous!

And yet, like so much of our faith, that which at first glance appears to be so inscrutable, upon closer examination, we might just discover that some hints, some insights, some clues, are offered, helping us to see a bit more clearly.

And when it comes to the Holy Trinity, what those hints, insights and clues point to is that the very foundation, the very nature of all that is – is relationship.

From the earliest sentences in the earliest book of the very first Testament, the book of Genesis, when creation is imagined by the magnificent author of this wonderful tale, what is imagined is that God is God in relationship.

Thus the constant references to God – in the plural: God speaking as “we” and “us.”

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are our human ways of describing this God who is Relationship.

The God who is Relationship creates – so that more relationships might exist, and then gives us the liberty to practice relationship – freely.

Or not.

On the cover of your Sunday bulletin you’ll see a very famous icon that depicts the Trinity.

If you look very carefully toward the bottom, at the part of the table that’s facing us, there’s a small rectangle.

And it’s believed that the writer of this icon (icons are written, not drawn), had placed a mirror in that spot so that whoever gazes at the icon of the Trinity will see herself included in their relationship.

I love that story!

It’s a story of our origins – and of our destiny.

And yet here we are, the first Sunday in June, the year 2023, and the world in which we live is itself seemingly schizophrenic.

We live in a world that is so completely connected that we can instantly communicate not only with our neighbor down the street, or our mother in America, but with our friends in Kenya on the other side of the planet, and even with astronauts who from time to time walk upon the moon or circle the earth in the space station.

On the one hand, it seems that we live in an ocean of communication.

And yet, we also live in a world in which countless teenagers are buying assault rifles so they can massacre school children.

And youngsters who cut themselves, simply to feel something.

Not because they are **mentally** ill, but because they are suffering from a soul sickness.

The soul sickness of disconnection.

Despite all of the supposed connection that our technology permits, the kind of connection that human beings actually need is the connection of flesh to flesh, breath to breath, eye to eye.

That's among the most beautiful features of the Hawaiian renaissance: the greeting with the ha — nose to nose, forehead to forehead — exchanging breath as a way of saying:

“I see you and I know you.”

Tragically, that essential kind of connection is disappearing faster than the bumblebee.

The connection that nourishes the ties that bind us to one another is the connection that allows us to sit across the table from one another.

We learn what's in the other person's soul when we are in intimate contact with each other.

The wry smile that disappears in a millisecond.

The raised eyebrow.

The soft sigh of bewilderment.

These encounters tell us more about each other in a moment than a week spent on TikTok or Facebook or Instagram.

And quite frankly, it's a good time in our church year to think about such things.

Because we are shifting today from significant seasons to another season in our Christian life and year.

In the first week of December, we began the season of Advent, that terrifying yet hopeful season reminding us of God's second coming and the renewal of all things, followed by the beautiful, peaceful birth of the baby Jesus there in a crib.

That's followed by the joy of the season of Epiphany, taking the good news out to the gentile world; followed by our time in the desert of Lent as we reflect and repent.

All of this is consummated with Holy Week, then Easter, then the Sunday of the Ascension.

And finally last week we celebrated the great feast of Pentecost as we came to grips with our transformation from mere spectators to necessary participants in God's holy project!

Today, the feast day of the Holy Trinity puts its exclamation mark on these holy seasons.

And starting tomorrow, we return to what our Roman Catholic friends call "ordinary time" and what we Episcopalians call "the Sundays after Pentecost."

Starting tomorrow, we are back on the road with Jesus.

Where we return once again, hopefully in a deeper, more profound, more sublime place than we were last year or the year before.

We're back on the road with Jesus as we learn more and more about what it means to be followers of the Way.

Followers of this strange Messiah from Galilee.

And because we are entering this long season of discipleship and learning and change, I have a question for you.

Can we dedicate ourselves this year to renewing a life of connection, of relationship?

Can we find an hour or two in our homes each and every morning afternoon or evening when phones are turned off?

When the TV chatter is silenced?

When we set aside time for nothing but each other?

Side-by-side?

In the flesh?

Eyeball to eyeball?

Human being to human being?

Can we do this starting tomorrow and continue daily until the first Sunday of Advent?

So that on that first Sunday of Advent we might ask ourselves how different are we now than when we began this important journey?

Can we challenge our extended families and friends who live here and abroad to try the same thing – starting tomorrow?

Can we practice looking up from our phones and at each other?

Connecting not only with those with whom we live, but also with the bank teller we see every Tuesday?

With the mailman doing her rounds?

With the stranger passing us by on the street?

Because, if a critical mass of us will do this, who knows, but perhaps we might make a connection with that 17-year-old who's feeling hopelessly and irretrievably lost.

And rather than buying a gun, or inflicting self-harm, perhaps they'll confess their lostness and loneliness.

We might notice in the eyes of a new mother the desperation that TikTok cannot see or cure.

And we might reach out and help her through her postpartum depression.

We might finally see and touch the wounded souls who pass us by every single day, and the many who stand right in front of us.

And we might, at long last, connect with those who would otherwise simply avert their gaze.

Isn't that the essential point to being a Christian in this world?

Didn't Christ, through his ministry of healing and then his bloody death and victorious resurrection — reconnect us to one another — and to God?

Isn't that why the veil of the temple was torn in two at the death of our Lord — signifying the new unity between heaven and earth?

If we believe these things, can we live our lives accordingly?

After all, if relationship is the ground of all being, where else can we truly find life; but just there: in relationship?

+amen