

## The Holy Trinity

Did you know that this is only Sunday in liturgical year that commemorates a doctrine of the church? While the concept of the Trinity is never explicitly stated in the Bible, there are references to the three persons of the Trinity: *Genesis*; today's Gospel reading; other places as well, in both the Old and New Testaments. Acceptance of the Trinity is a foundational belief of Christians, it is one of the doctrines that separate true Christianity from all other religions. So, as part of the foundational beliefs of Christianity, we should be able to understand it and explain it to others. The acceptance of the Trinity being a cornerstone of faith is expressed in all the creeds of the church.

The doctrine of Trinity was the church's way of trying to explain what was seen in the Bible & experienced in life. However, this doctrine is the hardest doctrine of the church to understand. Martin Luther put it this way: **"To try to deny the Trinity endangers your salvation, to try to understand the Trinity endangers your sanity."** John Wesley describes the near impossibility of understanding the Trinity in more "earthy" terms: **"Bring me a worm that can comprehend a human being, and then I will show you a human being that can comprehend the Triune God!"** Despite these warnings about the difficulties of understanding the Trinity, many have tried to come up with different analogies to describe it; many of which border on heresy. Some of these analogies include: a **person** who can be seen as a child to their parents, a spouse and a parent to their children: an **egg** with a shell, a white and the yolk; and the ancient Greek concept of **best friends**. Each analogy falls apart sooner or later mainly because we are using finite language and concepts to describe something that is infinite. While it is

extremely difficult and perhaps even impossible to fully describe and understand the Trinity, it is imperative that we accept the Trinity.

Today's Gospel reading is a part of Jesus' final discourse to His disciples on Maundy Thursday. It is here that we perhaps get one of the clearest pictures of the concept of the Trinity, not just in these verses, but throughout this final discourse which covers three chapters of John's Gospel account. Throughout this final discourse, Jesus talks about "the truth." As an interesting aside, Pilate will ask Jesus "what is truth" later the next morning & then walk out without waiting for an answer. Does Pilate think: it cannot be answered; truth is whatever we want it to be and convince others of it; that those who are in power determine what truth is? With all the talk about truth, fake news and the like nowadays, sometimes it becomes unclear what actually is true. With instant news feeds, social media and the like, sometimes the truth seems to be who says what first, the loudest and the most frequently. To find the 'real' truth, what we need to do is to look to something that is constant, something that we trust to be truthful, whose word we can count on. To do that, we should take a look at what Jesus means when He talks about the truth. Throughout this discourse & even throughout John's entire Gospel account, we see that the truth is that God loves us and desires that we be saved. Jesus by being the sacrifice that saves us, demonstrates God's love; and in demonstrating that, shows that He is the truth. This saving is not only for a select few, but for the whole world. Therefore, when Jesus declares that He is the Way, the Truth and the Light and that no one comes to the Father except through Him, Jesus is not saying that there is exclusivity, but that the whole world is included and that the love of God actually provides a path back to a right relationship with God.

Which brings us back to the Trinity. Instead of trying to explain how there can be three entities in the one God, I think it is better for us to think in terms of

relationships. At its most basic, we can picture the Trinity as a triangle where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit each occupy one of the angles of the triangle. What is often overlooked, is that there is a line that connects each angle and you can't tell where one angle ends and the next one begins. Each angle is not isolated from the other angles but is connected by the line between them. This is why Jesus can say what He does about the relationship between Him, the Father and the Spirit; that basically, they are indistinguishable. When we look at a triangle, we see only one shape, though we know there are three angles and three sides to the shape, all connected by trigonometry. That is the way it is with the Trinity. There are three entities, but only one Being. Each entity is in total communion with the other two, so much so that to those outside of it, it appears to be One. This is the best way that I can describe the Trinity: it is about being in relationships. The Good News is that Jesus wants to bring us into that relationship and have that same intimacy with the Father and the Spirit that He has.

So now that we know the truth, where do we go from here? How do we make a difference in others' lives once a difference has been made in ours? How do we live out that calling to live in God's grace, being fully assured that there is plenty for everyone, that we do not have to try to control it or limit who has access to it? We do that by the relationships that we have with each other. Instead of trying to have power or control over someone else, looking to see what we can take from them, we look to see what their needs are, helping to make sure that their needs are met before our desires are met. For example, we make sure that everyone has access to the basics of life - good water, adequate housing, sufficient food and the assurance of living without fear from others. We demonstrate Jesus' desire for us to be included in communion with the Trinity by including others into our relationships. We do it by speaking out against those who speak of exclusion; entitlement for

themselves; claiming God only for themselves and those who are like them; and the like. In other words, we live the way that Jesus lived - doing the will of God for the sake of others. We don't do this so that we can bask in communion with God, but we do it because Jesus has already brought us into that communion.

YouTube links:

Gospel and Sermon: <https://youtu.be/YclUYfb1y8E>

Service: <https://youtu.be/qLSugAogVCA>