

The Reverend Renee L. Fenner
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
Trinity Sunday-Year C
May 30, 2010

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

God's blessing and peace to you on this day which the church calls Trinity Sunday.

This is one of those Sundays that might put the fear of God into almost every preacher's heart. Perhaps it's me but after having celebrated Easter, Ascension, and last week's awesome Pentecost service-how does one "celebrate" or preach on the doctrine of the Trinity? Growing up I very distinctly remember Father or Sister pulling out a laminated shamrock to explain how God exists in Three Persons. I don't have a shamrock.

The word "Trinity" is not mentioned in the Bible yet it is the name of many churches and Cathedrals. In this diocese, the faith communities of De Soto, Hannibal, Kirksville, St. Charles, St. James, and St. Louis-Central West End all claim the name "Trinity".

The closest imagery we have in Scripture can be found in the last few verses of Matthew's Gospel when the disciples are instructed by Jesus to "Go therefore and make disciples of nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...."

There is no one, clear and absolute way to speak about God. Still, we speak of the Trinity in a very communal way as church based on our doctrines, creeds, catechism, and other teachings that have evolved from the earliest beginnings of Christianity. We state who God is for us in words of faith each time we pray our statements of faith, the Creeds; The Nicene Creed as part of our Eucharist and the Apostles' Creed at baptism. We have the option in morning and evening prayer to conclude with the Apostle Paul's words to the Corinthians, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore." We bless ourselves, our neighbors and our actions, "In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

So what is it that are we celebrating today? Today is not set on the Church calendar to celebrate a doctrine but to celebrate who God IS. Today we center on the very core of our faith and that is-belief in ONE God-One God who exists in three Persons and one substance, Father, Son and Holy Spirit/Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. It is about the way in which we understand the “mystery” of God as God is revealed in Christ and known to us by the Holy Spirit.

The readings chosen for today give us a glimpse into the awesomeness, power, wonder, wisdom, and the mystery of God. The lessons from John’s gospel that we have heard over these last few weeks have all spoken to the intense and personal relationship that Jesus had with his Father. And in doing so he also spoke of the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Spirit promised to his disciples as we heard again today. Theirs- the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the PERFECT relationship and we are invited in. This is perhaps, what this day is all about. God does not exist in solitary individualism but in a community of love and unity. WE were not made to exist in solitary individualism but in community that also lives out that same expression of love, unity, and relationship. One does not come to a sense of good and relations in a societal context by one’s self. Our lives are best lived in community where we are taught by one another, nourished by one another, and are in relationship with one another and with our God.

Scripture itself tells us that God has always been in relationship even before the sun and earth were formed. In Genesis we read: “Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.” And it was God who sought relationship in humankind as Adam and Eve were molded from the “dust of the ground.” And generation upon generation upon generation has been formed ever since “to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God” (BCP page 845). We’ve sometimes done all this well and we have done it discouragingly not so well as we continue to harm one another and to pollute our earth and we have sometimes put God on the “back burner” as we tout our scientific advancements and accomplishments.

Dame Julian of Norwich was a Benedictine nun who lived in the 14th century and thought to be one of the greatest English mystics, and first female English writer.* In her book, Revelations of Divine Love, Julian gives us a perspective of our relationship with the Trinity. She wrote: “We

are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Ghost; and the Father is enclosed in us, and the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Ghost is enclosed in us: almighty, all wisdom, all goodness, one God, one Lord.”

How does one preach on the Trinity? It is a mystery! Yet we are reminded that our God is a very real and all encompassing Being in whose image we have all been created and with whom we are all drawn into relationship. God yearns to be in relationship with you, with us. This makes a difference in how we live our lives! We are drawn in real and tangible ways as God calls us to extend God’s Self and God’s kingdom of shalom-peace and wholeness, justice, goodness, compassion, caring, sharing, laughter, joy, and love.

There is no end to how God will reveal God’s self and God’s work in the world, or how God will be experienced in our lives.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with all evermore. Amen.

* Julian of Norwich is honored in our Episcopal calendar on May 8th.