

Trinity Sunday 2010

## St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church

Written and Preached by The Rev. Susan Parsons May 30, 2010

In the name of our God, who creates us, redeems us, sustains us. Amen.

Today is Trinity Sunday and  
Perhaps you don't care too much because  
The doctrine of the Trinity  
Doesn't generally inspire a lot of  
Excitement or interest  
It may in fact lead you to hope that  
The bulletin has been loaded up with  
A whole lot of interesting facts about  
Upcoming events or  
Possibly a crossword puzzle because  
Let's face it  
Father Son and Holy Spirit or  
Creator Redeemer Sustainer  
The Trinity  
Seems a little awkward and unnecessary

It is hard to wrap our minds around this idea of  
A God in three persons that is equal and united in  
Power and thought and action  
No one of them working without the others  
Yet each distinct from one another  
That would be the theological definition  
It just seems as I said so unnecessary  
It also sounds suspiciously like three Gods  
Even if we are assured it is not

What the Trinity gives us though  
Is the opportunity to  
Explore God's being in the world  
How God works in the world and  
In the first readings this morning  
We hear the words of God  
As Wisdom

Though trinity is only implied in the reading from Proverbs  
Spirit or wisdom speaks to us of how  
She was in creation from the beginning and  
Working with God to create a world that is  
Ordered and beautiful and good  
Spirit talks of the joy and delight they have together  
In creation and in humanity

This extraordinary and joyful vision of the world and  
Of humanity  
Is a remarkable contrast to the idea that  
The world is in some sort of decline that  
We are headed for a disaster of Biblical proportions  
Instead this Wisdom says that our God has  
From the beginning created a world of  
Wisdom order and beauty and that  
God as Spirit moves through the world

Jesus has been speaking of this Spirit  
For the past few weeks  
Telling his disciples of how it will  
Come to them and they all be joined together  
By this Spirit  
In today's Gospel  
He says  
'When the Spirit of truth comes  
She will guide you into all truth;  
For she will not speak on her own  
But will speak whatever she hears and  
She will declare to you the things that are to come  
...For all that the Father has is mine'  
And earlier in these same passages  
He had said to them  
'The Father is in me and I in the Father' and  
'The Father and I are one'

Jesus definitely recognizes and  
Is talking about God and Spirit as  
Different and if we think we are struggling  
Imagine how the disciples must've felt  
They can't have been too clear on what

Jesus was talking about  
We've been in the midst of what's called  
The farewell discourse of John  
A goodbye speech by Jesus at the Last Supper  
In which Jesus is trying to reassure the disciples  
And us that we will not be left alone or comfortless  
It isn't until after he's resurrected and  
They experience the Holy Spirit at Pentecost  
They will remember and understand what  
Jesus meant by these words and  
They will be filled with this 'Spirit of truth'  
They will no longer be dazed and confused and scared  
They will be people who can  
Go out and change the world

John and Proverbs are not speaking the language of doctrine  
This is the language of relationship  
The language of mutuality of devotion  
Of a community and  
It flows from  
God to H/humanity to Spirit and back again  
It is like a divine dance  
Graceful interwoven and deeply connected

This is why 'the Trinity' matters  
Because it is humanity's best effort  
To describe God and  
In describing God  
We are to some extent describing ourselves because  
We are made in the image of God  
The Spirit flows through us and among us  
And it is ourselves we are describing when  
We make the effort to  
Wrap our minds around the Trinity  
We are creative  
We are human and  
We are filled in our best moments  
With the Spirit  
We are dancing with the God and Spirit who delights in us

It is hard for some of us to understand ourselves this way

We tend to remember the foolish things we've done  
We tend to remember the places we have failed  
We think we can't dance

Back before I was embarrassed  
By my dancing  
Back when I was a young girl  
I loved to dance and  
I was particularly fond of ballet  
I loved the stretching the strengthening  
The leaping  
The perfect movements  
All the discipline it required and  
I especially loved working with others to create a dance

That's what I remember most especially about dancing is  
How it felt to be a part of the whole  
How the whole troupe of us moved together  
Yet we each had our own part in the dance  
Often different than anyone else's part  
It is not easy to describe the sense of it  
Those of you who dance know what I mean  
How you must be deeply aware of your own movements  
As well as of those around you  
You must be one with everyone and  
Infinitely aware of your own movements  
Sometimes moving in unison  
Sometimes not  
There is music to draw it together and  
Costumes and light and  
When it goes well  
There is nothing like it  
It is joy and delight

To be a part of a dance is to begin to understand trinity  
I am one and I am part of a whole and  
There is a Spirit that unifies and animates us

The dance of the Trinity is  
The same dance we are to be having with ourselves and  
It is the same dance

The church is to be having with one another

It is hard to remember this because

We are beset on all sides by all kinds of things that

Would argue that this is not a beautiful joyful world

We can point to all kinds of horrible ugly things

But if we fail to remember and celebrate the other

Then we will lose our love and our joy

We will lose our hope

Hope does not disappoint us Paul said

Because God's love has been poured out into our hearts

Through the Holy Spirit

This is a very important thing to remember

To hold onto our hope

To hold onto our joy and our delight

To remember that we are loved

It isn't easy to do this but

It is just as important as

Anything else we do

All our work at church

Must be done with some sense of

Love and delight and awareness of the Spirit

Now theologians would spoil our meditations

On dancing by telling us

The doctrine of the Trinity states that

The three all and always

Must occupy the same space at the same time

But we are meditating here and

We will ask the theologians in the room to

Allow us a bit of license so

Trinity can be more than an abstract concept

So we can let ourselves believe that

God works in the world

As a powerful creative and loving force

That makes difference in us and

They'll also want to get out of the way because

The rest of us

Are all going to go out and start dancing

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

One God

Mother of us all

OLD TESTAMENT: Proverbs 8: 1 - 4, 22 - 31 (RCL)

(NRSV) Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?

2 On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;

3 beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:

4 "To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.

22 The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.

23 Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains had been shaped,

before the hills, I was brought forth-- 26 when he had not yet made earth and fields,

or the world's first bits of soil. 27 When he established the heavens, I was there,

when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 when he made firm the skies above,

when he established the fountains of the deep, 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,

so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 then I was beside him, like a master worker;

and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

PSALM 8 (RCL)

(NRSV) O LORD, our Sovereign,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants

you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,

to silence the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars that you have established;

4 what are human beings that you are mindful of them,

mortals that you care for them?

5 Yet you have made them a little lower than God,

and crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;

you have put all things under their feet,

7 all sheep and oxen,

and also the beasts of the field,

8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,

whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD, our Sovereign,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

8 *Domine, Dominus noster* (ECUSA BCP)

1 O LORD our Governor, \*

how exalted is your Name in all the world!

- 2 Out of the mouths of infants and children \*  
your majesty is praised above the heavens.
- 3 You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, \*  
to quell the enemy and the avenger.
- 4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, \*  
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
- 5 What is man that you should be mindful of him? \*  
the son of man that you should seek him out?
- 6 You have made him but little lower than the angels; \*  
you adorn him with glory and honor;
- 7 You give him mastery over the works of your hands; \*  
you put all things under his feet:
- 8 All sheep and oxen, \*  
even the wild beasts of the field,
- 9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, \*  
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.
- 10 O LORD our Governor, \*  
how exalted is your Name in all the world!

**2 A Song of Praise** *Benedictus es, Domine* (alt. for ECUSA; BCP)

*Song of the Three Young Men, 29-34*

Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our fathers; \*  
praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed are thou for the name of thy Majesty; \*  
praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed are thou in the temple of thy holiness; \*  
praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed are thou that beholdest the depths,  
and dwellest between the Cherubim; \*  
praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed art thou on the glorious throne of thy kingdom; \*  
praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed are thou in the firmament of heaven; \*  
praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed are thou, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; \*  
praised and exalted above all for ever.

**13 A Song of Praise** *Benedictus es, Domine* (alt. for ECUSA; BCP)

*Song of the Three Young Men, 29-34*

Glory to you, Lord God of our fathers; \*  
you are worthy of praise; glory to you.

Glory to you for the radiance of your holy Name; \*  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

Glory to you in the splendor of your temple; \*  
on the throne of your majesty, glory to you.

Glory to you, seated between the Cherubim; \*  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

Glory to you, beholding the depths; \*  
in the high vault of heaven, glory to you.

Glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; \*  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

NEW TESTAMENT: Romans 5: 1 - 5 (all)

Roma 5:1 (NRSV) Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

GOSPEL: John 16: 12 - 15 (all)

John 16:12 (NRSV) [Jesus said,] "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

As beloved Abba and Son, God's love "has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). God is ever creator, the nameless one, beyond our understanding. And yet this God has devised multiple ways to invite us home, and to allow the love with which we're showered to spill over, to be given anew.

As I look around, all too often I see people who desperately need to know what this is like, people who feel alone, cast out, *not* beloved. What would happen if we looked at all those around us with fresh eyes, seeing not rivals or annoyances or, perhaps worst of all, as invisibles...but rather God's Beloved ones, God's Dance partners? How often I have been on flights and seen individuals trying to carry on board huge, oversized bags stuffed to the brim. They pant and sweat and curse under their breath as they struggle to fit their baggage into the overhead compartment, refusing to let go of a burden that their airline hosts stand ready to take off their backs. In ancient times, people had many gods in their image; now we all too often try to be gods ourselves, carrying the weight of the world on our all-too human shoulders, feeling guilt and responsibility and resentment. On this Trinity Sunday, God gives us a priceless gift that we can share with all those we meet, all those whose life's baggage has become so full, so heavy, that they have forgotten who they are and whose they are. We can dare to look them in the eye and quietly remind them "not only with our lips but in our lives" that they are not God and don't need to be. There is one God, who is relationship, who is Divine Dance, who is Love. And they are God's Beloved