

Genesis 1:1-2:4a
Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
MATTHEW 28:16-20

Trinity Sunday is the rare major Holy Day of the Christian Church which celebrates a doctrine rather than an event in salvation history. Christmas, Epiphany, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost celebrate *events* in *our* history: Jesus' birth, the visit of the wise men, the last supper, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers. Trinity Sunday celebrates the doctrine that the One True God is revealed to us as the union of three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – in one God.

Now, in case you're afraid – or perhaps hoping – that I will now give a profound intellectual, theological explanation of what exactly that means, I won't. Far greater intellects than I have written longer analyses or reflections on this doctrine than I ever will and, while valuable, not too many of these treatises, in my humble opinion, made good sermons.

What I will say about the sublime mystery of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is this: *even God cannot be God without relationship*. Even God *within* the unity of God's self is relationship. I know of no other way to try to “explain” the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, and comprise an interconnected relationship *within* God. God manifests God's self by being in relationship with us and with the Creation.

The Creation was a spontaneous act of generosity by God, as we learn in this great passage from Genesis 1:1-2:4a. God had no ulterior motive in beginning the Creation. God was not bored, did not *need* anything, and was not making slaves for God's self – as opposed to some ancient pagan myths. God is self-dependent and already had (and has) relationship within God's self, but it is also God's nature to *be creative*, and with that comes generosity and the willingness to give human beings, “created in the image of God,” *freedom*, even freedom to break our relationship with our Creator, with each other, and with the creation.

That, not so incidentally, is the text book definition of **Sin** (singular and with a capital “S”). The Catechism (page 848 in The Book of Common Prayer) says, “Sin is the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation.”

In this morning's passage from the Hebrew Scriptures all we hear is the unfolding of the will of God in Creation, and we hear about abundance, beauty, order, justice and peace. If you read this passage carefully you may be surprised to read that both human beings and animals were given *plants* to eat, period. No person and no animal ate animals. Male and female human beings alike and equally were created in the image of God. There was a Sabbath rest on the seventh day. And humankind was to “have dominion over” the animals and plants, while God retained *ownership* of the earth and of all of its inhabitants. And Creation was judged by God to be “very good.”

How did we get from that to human beings thinking they had the right to exterminate entire species of animals and plants as well as millions of our own kind, to men thinking they had the right to oppress and dominate women, and to people thinking they never owed it to

God *or* to themselves to take a day off from all work every week to praise God and be nurtured by God?

How did we get from Genesis 1 to the worst aspects of life today? Sin.

How did we get from the beautiful, abundant and peace-filled Creation, to an age in which the government of Myanmar blocks humanitarian aid for the victims of a huge natural disaster due to pride, hatred of foreigners and contempt for its own people? How did we get from Genesis 1 to genocide in Rwanda? How did we get from primeval peace to the slave trade to America? How did we get from an abundant and beautiful Earth to one whose environment is daily degraded and whose people hunger for food while food prices rise due to misguided governmental policies and money-hungry speculators in food and in energy?

Sin.

“Sin is the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our **relationship** with God, with other people, and with all creation.”

“Distorting our relationships with other people” takes personal, one-to-one forms as well as national and global forms.

In Harry Chapin’s most famous song, “The cat’s in the cradle,” a man looks back at how he was always “too busy” to spend time with his son when his boy was growing up and, now that he’s become a grandfather, he realizes to his horror that his son is as indifferent to him as he once was to his son: “My boy was just like me.” A distorted relationship.

“Lookin’ for love in all the wrong places” is not just a line from a country song, it is some people’s approach to life: distorted relationships.

Even worse, as I learned at our Dioceses’ Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Workshop last Tuesday, one-eighth of all boys and one-quarter of all girls in our country are sexually abused before the age of 18 and, tragically, many grow up to become abusers themselves, the sickness and the sin reproducing itself in more and more tragic, disastrously-distorted relationships.

All of these problems – and many, many more which are the consequence of distorted or broken relationships caused by human sin – are problems for all of us, whether we have personally experienced any of them or not.

As one of England’s greatest poets, John Donne, wrote nearly 400 years ago:

“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

That is reality. No one is an island, just as no one is a “self-made man” or “self-made woman.” (If you know any people who think they are, just ask them what it was like when they created the earth they stand on, the water they drink and the air they breathe. We exist because God created all this and more, as well as us.)

Because we are all connected profoundly, sorrows and losses diminish each of us – but joys and gains for others also enhance each of us. Broken and distorted relationships add to our pain; restored and healed relationships add to our gain.

How, then, can we experience restoration and healing of relationships which each of us, and all people, need so much? First of all, by recognizing our need: we are not islands or “rocks” as Paul Simon sang, or self-made: rather, as the ‘70’s song has it, “We are family.” That song, incidentally, was the finale at Elda’s and my wedding reception. I had to marry a Cuban to really get the concept that *relationship is primary, specific activities are secondary*.

Who invented that concept? God. Remember, God cannot be God without relationship within God as well as towards people, creatures and the creation? Well, **neither can we be fully human without good relationships with God, within ourselves, with other people, other creatures and with the whole creation.**

“Relationships” are not just for fans of the Lifetime Channel – or of ESPN, which would have far fewer viewers if not for those fans who feel a “relationship” with their favorite teams. Relationships – holy, wholesome and mutually nurturing relationships – are crucial to the humanity within each of us, and to our highest calling to be children of God.

Calling up friends or relatives you haven’t spoken to since last Christmas? That’s nurturing relationships – one of our callings as Christians. Asking people we have hurt for forgiveness? That’s one step towards healing relationships. Asking God, and perhaps a trusted counselor, or members of a 12 Step Group, for strength and guidance to change wrong behaviors? That’s crucial to restoring and changing relationships.

We have been and are being created by God the Father. That means a profound relationship between God and each of us. We have been redeemed by God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who went to a whole lot of trouble to give each of us and all people a second chance. That means a profound relationship between Christ and us. We have been offered sanctification – growth in holiness – by God the Holy Spirit. No better coach could ever exist, so let’s each of us develop a profound relationship with the Holy Spirit.

What a great way to celebrate Trinity Sunday: for us to repent, to restore relationship and to be renewed by God in our minds, in our bodies and in our spirits, which are also profoundly and intimately related within each of us.

The greatest African Saint, Augustine of Hippo, said that every person has “a God-shaped hole” in them which only God can fill, and prayed, “Lord, our hearts are restless ‘til we rest in Thee.” May we find wholeness and holiness by filling our God-shaped holes only with God, and experience joy and peace beyond anything we could make by ourselves.

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

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