

Trinity Sunday, Year C, 0502613
All Saints Episcopal Church

In the name of the One God, Wisdom, Grace and Love. Amen.

Today is Trinity Sunday, which is always the first Sunday after Pentecost. It is the only Principal Feast of the Church celebrating -- of all things -- a doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity was debated and argued about initially in the 4th Century, and, although I am not aware of it causing any holy wars, it is a big part of the division between the church of the East and the church of the West.

The word trinity is not found anywhere in the Bible. But the document from which this doctrine is drawn IS in the Book of Common Prayer! If you haven't noticed it before, you might want to look at page 864.

On this page, you can find *The Creed of St. Athanasius*. Now it seems that St. Athanasius didn't actually write it, but it got named after him, since he was one of the debaters on the subject. Let me just read a short portion of it for you:

'And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity,
and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the
Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son; and another of
the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one;
the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost
incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are three eternal, but one eternal.'

Is that clear? Should I go on?

Don't worry, I won't. Because definitions are, well, by definition, aimed at being precise, technical, strict, fixed, and accurate - and a relationship, which is what the Trinity is, cannot be explained precisely, strictly and accurately. Nothing we can say about the Trinity is complete, nor will it ever be. It's one of those mystery things.

So rather than tax my brain and yours with stuff that I can bet most of us here are not really interested in (we'll leave that to the professional theologians who get paid the BIG bucks), let's go at this Sunday with a much different approach. Let's relax, get comfortable and enjoy the next few minutes!

There's a widespread idea that everything comes in threes. I've always heard that used in terms of bad things, like the rash of broken bones we have had here at All Saints for a while (although I think we might have to think about sixes or even nines for us), or when bad news comes in the mail, things like that. But, apparently, in Norway, there is a proverb that says *good things* come in threes.

On Trinity Sunday, it is appropriate to talk about threes. We have after all, the One-in-Three and the Three-in-One. But three seems to be the easiest number to remember. There is a rule of three that suggests that things that come in threes are inherently funnier, more satisfying, or more effective than other numbers of things. Audiences and readers are more likely to consume information presented in threes. (Hence, the joke in seminary when we were learning to preach that you should always have three points and a poem in your sermon - nothing more, nothing less!)

So, while according to the 1969 hit song by Three Dog Night (three, get it?), *One is the Loneliest Number*, three seems to be the most memorable number.

1. Just for fun, here are some familiar threes: we read about *The Three Little Pigs*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Three Billy Goats Gruff* before we eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, with a knife, fork, and spoon. We hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil despite the fact that we are threatened by lions, tigers, and bears. We play rock, paper, scissors, and we enter into something lock, stock, and barrel. We go to school for reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, morning, noon and night. We take, give and share no matter - win, lose, or draw. Our goals are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and we count on the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government to assist us in this pursuit, yesterday, today,

and tomorrow, because we cherish our government of the people, by the people, and for the people. We live a hop, skip, and a jump from snap, crackle, and pop. Our journey of life has a beginning, middle, and an end. On the journey we encounter lights that may be red, yellow, or green. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Ready, set, go!

2. I said earlier that the Trinity is a relationship. Perhaps one of the best ways to understand the Trinity is to find an image that incorporates not only 'persons', but the action of the relationship as well. One such image of God the Trinity is God the Dance. Now I don't mean ballroom, or rock 'n roll, or even square dancing. Instead it is a circle dance - a dance with three partners dancing together -- Father, Son, and Spirit with hands clasped in a circle, engaged in that dance that is their life together, a dance without beginning and without end.

The music of the dance is the same music that made the stars, the sea breezes, and the pulsing world inside atoms. It is the music that made us, and that we can hear during celebrations and silences and even during tragedy when we know that life waits for us again. It is unceasing, just like the dance. It is the rhythm of the Trinity.

Though the dance is unending, we must also note that the circle breaks open, and the Son and the Spirit, still holding fast to the hands of the Father, reach out their other hands to invite us into the circle, to invite us to dance, to become their partners, participants in their life.

Nothing should hold us back from accepting that invitation. It doesn't matter how well we dance; it does matter that we take a risk, that we get up and go out on the floor, that we join the circle and move to the music. The three of the Trinity makes it a community of persons. This community creates and redeems and blesses each and every one of us so that we can be part of the community as well. We've all been invited to join; there are no outcasts, no outsiders. We are called by God to recognize ourselves as children of God...as God's beloved. Will you join?

3. If the threes and the dance aren't grabbing you, here's another option: as a former choir member, it occurs to me that the choir reflects some important aspects of the Holy Trinity. Now, if you know this particular choir, that may seem a

bit of a theological stretch, but bear with me. The different 'persons' of the Trinity have different roles to play - the Creator of the universe; the Redeemer who frees us from the sin that separates us from God and others; and the Spirit who lives within us and comforts and guides us.

In the choir, each choir member, each section - soprano, alto, tenor and bass - has its own role to play. You can hear each part. Sometimes the parts are singing different words, but what you hear is a seamless work, unified at its core. It is beautiful because of all the parts, but if one part were missing, the music would not be complete. No one section is more important than the others. (Unless it's the sopranos. Did I mention that I'm a soprano? But I digress...)

The individuals in the choir can make music together they could not make alone. Individual and unified at the same time, they are many and they are one.

So, like the long-ago theologians thought, we reflect some of the Trinitarian theology. We retain our individual characteristics, personalities and gifts, but we also join them all together into something new and beautiful. You don't have to sing in a choir. You just have to be human and express your gifts. We are individuals and we are a body, We can make beautiful 'music' when we bring all of ourselves to blend together into the whole.

It's God's kind of music.

And now I need you to help me. If you will stand, we are going to BE the community of Trinity. There's a hymn inserted in your bulletin, written by Richard Leach. You'll recognize the tune. Let's sing it together, each of us individuals and together as the Body. And...if you feel like it...it's OK to dance!

Happy Trinity Sunday!

Come, Join the Dance of Trinity

*Come, join the dance of Trinity, before all worlds begun--
the interweaving of the Three, the Father, Spirit, Son.
The universe of space and time did not arise by chance,
but as the Three, in love and hope, made room within their dance.*

*Come, see the face of Trinity, newborn in Bethlehem;
then bloodied by a crown of thorns outside Jerusalem.
The dance of Trinity is meant for human flesh and bone;
when fear confines the dance in death, God rolls away the stone.*

*Come, speak aloud of Trinity, as wind and tongues of flame
set the people free at Pentecost to tell the Savior's name.
We know the yoke of sin and death, our necks have worn it smooth;
go tell the world of weight and woe that we are free to move!*

*Within the dance of Trinity, before all worlds begun,
we sing the praises of the Three, the Father, Spirit, Son.
Let voices rise and interweave, by love and hope set free,
to shape in song this joy, this life: the dance of Trinity.*

Come, Join The Dance of Trinity

Text: Richard Leach

Tune: Kingsfold (CMD)