

TRINITY SUNDAY

2 Cor. 13:11-13 & Matt. 28:16-20

A little boy came home from Vacation Bible School and told his mom that the pastor had said that God was everywhere. "That is true," his mother responded. "Is He in the oven when it's hot?"

"Yes," replied the mother. "How about in the cupboard?"

"Yes," said the mother. "How about in the fridge when the door is closed and the light is off?" "Oh yes," retorted the mother.

"How about in the sugar bowl", asked the boy, as he took the lid off the bowl. "Well, I suppose He is", answered the mother. The boy slammed the bowl shut and announced triumphantly: "Got Him"! Of course, the mother had a lot more explaining to do.

As humorous as this story may be, there is some truth in it about how people view God. Oftentimes, people view God in similar ways as did this boy, they think that God is small enough for them to put Him into a tidy package, which they are able to control and understand completely. They want a God of their own making, on their own condition and terms, who will pander to their needs at their every beck and call, a cosmic bell-hop God. Rather than accepting the fact that we humans are created in God's image; they want to create a God in their version of the human image. They want a sanitized, tame God. In short, they want to be Lord and master over their God.

This temptation to create the one, true God into our own image is the oldest and most dangerous one known to humankind. It's associated with the story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Bible, and it has devastating consequences for both God and

humankind. It results in a sinful human condition, which distorts our relationship with God and, along with this, our view of God. Could this be one of the reasons why Christians did not celebrate the festival of the Holy Trinity in the church calendar year until probably the eleventh century?

According to Church Historians, in the eleventh century, local dioceses observed the festival. In the twelfth century Pope Alexander II discouraged the observance of the day; he believed it unnecessary, because each day of the church's worship was occasion to proclaim the holy Trinity. In 1332, however, Pope John XXII ordered the festival to be observed universally on this Sunday. It has been observed annually in all Christian churches ever since.

This festival is unique in the church year in that it is the only festival to be based on a doctrine, rather than specific historical Biblical events. The Bible does refer to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, however, no place in the Bible is the word Trinity mentioned. All of this is useful information for us.

Some might be wondering at this point, what the reason is for giving all this information, or what does this teach us? Well, it teaches us this: That when we speak of God as the Holy Trinity; when we formulate doctrines of the Trinity; when we worship God as Trinity; when we greet, bless, and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do it all with great humility, realizing our God is so much more than we realize at times.

We shall never be able to capture God; to put God in a neat package of our own making. God shall always remain more than our words and doctrines, our beliefs and expressions of worship, our purest intentions and actions. God is the Holy/Wholly Other God. That means there is a mystery about

God, which is tremendous in the sense that it is so awesome and overwhelming, we are unable to get our heads around it, as the expression goes. The mysterious Holy/Wholly Other God, is light years greater than our capacities to adequately explain or understand God.

There is a story about a Bavarian parish priest who announced to his congregation on the Feast of the Trinity, that the Trinity was so great a mystery, of which he understood nothing, that there would unfortunately be no sermon that day. I bet some here today wish that the same approach had been followed here.

Having affirmed the deep mystery of God, we as Christians are able to, on the other hand, affirm an exact opposite truth, which seems to contradict the Holy/Wholly otherness of God: Namely, that God has come close to us in the human person, Jesus of Nazareth. When we see and know Jesus Christ, we see and know God. The Holy Spirit, working in and through the Word and sacraments, helps us to know and see this Jesus.

How one plus one plus one equals one still largely remains a mystery. The relationships that exist between the three persons, yet one Godhead, are not spelled out in great detail in the Bible.

Thus, the Triune God is best known in and through a life of worship and service, rather than in hard to understand doctrines.

Although our God-language is very important, ultimately, all of our attempts to understand One God in Three Persons shall remain limited, distorted by our sinful condition, therefore incomplete.

So, the next time someone asks you to explain God the Holy Trinity to them, remember the following story, as related by Desmond Tutu, in his book, *Hope and Suffering*: “Anthony Bloom, the Orthodox master of the spiritual life told the story of a simple Russian country priest who was confronted by a

distinguished scientist. The scientist came up with apparently devastating arguments against the existence of God and declared, “I don't believe in God”. The humble priest quickly replied: “Oh, that doesn't matter because God believes in you”. That is what Jesus says to us: “God believes in you”. God believes in all of us. Because God believes in all of us, we are able to worship and serve God the Holy Trinity.

AMEN.