

Year A, June 11, 2017
Trinity Sunday
Christ Church, Mexia

We just had a password audit for our computers at Baylor and they were not happy that mine was so long. It is MickeyMinniePlutoHueyLouieDeweyDonaldGoofySacramento
When they asked me why it was so long, I rolled my eyes and reminded them: "Duh! The directions say it must contain at least eight characters and include one capital." Well, maybe I am not the best one to try to explain the Trinity today.

The Book of Common Prayer doesn't get used nearly often enough in the church, so I'd like to ask you to take one now and turn to page 864 please – The Creed of Saint Athanasius – and read along with me: (read selected parts). So, now you understand. Right?? Well, that may be difficult to grasp.

Setting aside, for the moment, Gregory Nazianzen's observation that we have no analogies in the world around us that allows me to convey the concept of the Trinity, let me muddle forward.

Perhaps you have read Father Richard Rohr's relatively new book, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*. That would be good, because he is much better at explaining things than I am. Anyway, in it, he explains that in the past: "... our attempts to explain the Trinitarian Mystery (and I think mystery is the operative word here) we overemphasized the individual qualities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but not so much the relationships between them. That is where all the power is! That is where all the meaning is!" The Rev. Katerina Whitley adds: "Please note the word relationship in this Divine Dance and imagine not the classic dances of the (1940s) and fifties when dancing meant two people responding to music together, nor the dance of the young today who seem to be dancing with their own selves, but the traditional folk dances of the Middle East – holding hands and moving in a circle." The latter I believe conveys a better mental picture of the relationship aspect of the Trinity – the togetherness or oneness, while still allowing for the individual aspects.

In another example, Carole Crumley reminds us of an icon of the Holy Trinity created by Andrew Rublev in fifteenth-century Russia. Rublev reportedly based his icon on his reflections of the scripture in Genesis (18:1-15) where Abraham and Sarah receive three messengers who

foretell of the birth of Isaac. In the icon depicting the scene, he drew three figures seated at a square table one per side. The open fourth side is directly in front of the viewer of the icon. The figures "appear to be looking into each other with an unqualified dignity, respect and loving gaze – three distinct persons, three yet one." - as we tend to think of the Trinity today.

Henri Nouwen spent many hours gazing at this icon during a long time of depression in his life. He wrote about this particular experience in his book, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord*. As a result of his reflection, Nouwen came to regard the Trinity as a Community of Love, a House of Love. According to him, there was no fear, no anger, no greed, no anxieties, no violence, no pain or suffering in that household – only love, enduring love and a deepening trust among the members. He concluded that it was a house in which he could truly dwell forever. I think perhaps, we might all desire to live in such a household.

And if none of these images is helpful, you might consider the text from that delightful book, *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young, when Mackenzie the principal character meets God in the persons of Elousia, the large black woman, Yeshua, the middle-eastern-looking man, and Sarayu, the seemingly Asian woman. God had invited Mack to meet at the shack, but after meeting the three characters there, he is still a bit confused. Here is Young's summation:

"Thoughts tumbled over each other as Mack struggled to figure out what to do. Was one of these people God? What if they were hallucinations or angels, or God was coming later? That could be embarrassing. Since there were three of them, maybe this was a Trinity sort of thing. But two women and a man and none of them white? Then again, why had he naturally assumed that God would be white? He knew his mind was rambling, so he focused on the one question he most wanted answered.

'Then,' Mack struggled to ask, "which one of you is God?' 'I am,' said all three in unison. Mack looked from one to the next, and even though he couldn't begin to grasp what he was seeing and hearing, he somehow believed them." (p. 87)

Though we may never totally be able to grasp this mysterious concept, the important part is that we believe it. So, I hope these remarks have been helpful to you today in that regard.

In the name of the one God - the Creator, The Word, and the Spirit.
Amen.