

Trinity Sunday 2017  
06/11/17

One night a minister was busy writing his sermon for the weekend. His little daughter saw him working busily and asked him what he was doing. He said he was writing his sermon. She asked, "Daddy, how do you know what to write?" He answered, "God tells me what to write." Then she asked, "Why do you keep erasing?"

This is kind of how I feel when we get to one of these great feasts of the Church that are especially difficult to preach about. That story above comes from Fr. Joe Robinson, who, when speaking of the mystery of the Trinity, asks if we should be surprised that God is mysterious, that God would be greater than we can understand? After all, if we had a God we could totally understand, wouldn't that be more a God we created out of our mind, than the God who created us and this entire universe, which also happens to be beyond our ability to fully comprehend.

Edward Dowling tries to explain it by talking about people from the east, like the Hindus. They realize that any idea the human mind can form of God is also bound to be inadequate. So when they pray before a statue representing God, they apologize to God for having to adore Him in this particular form when He is in fact formless. They apologize for having to worship Him in this particular temple when He is in fact everywhere. And they apologize for being too limited as humans to really comprehend Him. But us Westerners feel that reason should explain everything of importance. So if there is a God, we should be able to understand Him.

Dowling then reminds us that many a saint and theologian have tried to explain the Trinity. St. Patrick used the image of a shamrock: one stem, three leaves, yet one plant. St. Ignatius compared the Trinity to three notes comprising a single chord or sound. And I've mentioned before about St. Augustine walking along a beach, thinking of the Trinity, when he came upon a small boy running with a bucket, from the ocean to a small hole, emptying the bucket's contents before returning for more water. When the saint

asked the boy what he was doing, the reply was that he was trying to put the ocean into the hole.

Augustine then realized he'd found his answer to the mystery of the Trinity: he was trying to put an infinite God into his finite mind.

When it comes right down to it, this celebration is about a relationship, a relationship of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Dominican Peter Cameron suggests what defines a person is relationship. He says that the first thing we were ever called – son, daughter, child – signifies a relationship. The way we truly know ourselves to the world is through the relationships that form our lives. To be “personal” with another is to forge such a relationship.

You see, just like the Trinity, we are meant to be in relationships – we have no real identity apart from one another. Pat Merrin reminds us we are inseparable within networks of relationships as brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives, companions and partners, known and named and called into meaningful and intimate existence by one another.

When we think of those networks of relationships, we may not realize it but there are boundaries within each set. Sure we mostly get along as families, but there are times... And friends are mostly good and kind and compassionate to each other but there are times... So when we think about the Trinity and love and relationships and then speak about us in relationship with each other, we have to remember that the Trinity's set of relationships has no boundaries, while ours do. Perhaps when one of our relationships starts to sour, we'd do well to remind ourselves of that perfect relationship of the Trinity.

Let me finish with some words from one of my favorite authors, Frederick Buechner. He says that our lives, yours and mine, flow into each other as wave flows into wave, and unless there is peace and joy and freedom for you, there can be no real peace or joy or freedom for me. To see reality is to see that unless we live for each other and in and through each other, we don't really live very satisfactorily; there can really be life only where there really is love. And all love comes in and through relationships.