**St. Aidan’s Episcopal Church**

**Trinity Sunday**

**Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31**

**Psalm 8**

**Romans 5: 15**

**John 16:12-15**

**ONE GOD**

One God.

Omniscient. Omnipotent. Omnipresent.

All knowing. All powerful. Present everywhere.

“I AM who I AM.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

“I am the Lord, and there is no other”[[2]](#footnote-2)

“You shall have no other gods before me.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Thus, says the Lord, and who are we to find any other way to describe the One who created the heavens and the earth, an all that is in it.

All of us who have ever pondered God from a Trinitarian perspective, have slowly developed ways with which we can more easily access the power and majesty of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, our One God, our great I AM. When asked to describe the Trinity, we often veer toward the Holy Spirit, the Advocate sent by Jesus to bring us guidance and comfort as we continue on without Jesus in his human form.

We humans need to anthropomorphize things that are dear to us, including everything from houses and ships to dogs and teddy bears. We like to attribute human characteristics to objects, animals and yes…gods….and, more specifically, our own God, the Three in One. Artists throughout time have tried to capture an image of God and since the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and His sending of the Holy Spirit, as he made his departure to return from whence he came, the art evolved into depictions of each of the three natures of God as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father depicted in elaborate pictural bibles, stained glass windows and even modern art as a figure with a larger than life bodily frame, arms and fingers outstretched as if around the world He created, often with long hair and somehow residing on a cloud.

Jesus has been seen in every way imaginable within the eyes and hearts of diverse cultural hearts, but only recently have we begun to imagine that his face must have reflected his Jewish culture and environment in an around Galilee.

And, of course, as we explored last week, once the Holy Spirit was described as a dove in the Holy Gospels, the die was cast and the depiction of the Holy Spirit as a white bird, wings outstretched, diving earthward with purpose and power, was inevitable.

Looking at artistic representations of the Holy Trinity, one is always struck by the artist’s personal vision of the Triune God. Just yesterday, I discovered an Early Italian Renaissance fresco by the 15th century painter Masaccio. The painting hangs in the Dominican Church of Santa Maria Novella, in Florence. If you are travelling to Italy, you should plan to visit it, the work is considered to be one of Masaccio’s masterpieces. Reflecting our human capacity for applying human characteristics to things we cannot understand, even Masaccio and other great artists throughout the ages, paints God as all powerful above all things, reaching out and around all things, Jesus on the cross, God’s offering of God to atone for the sins of all humankind, and of course, the Holy Spirit, coming down from God, as God, toward Jesus, as if ready to move beyond Jesus and into the world.

The art work, as others, and the depictions we carry in our heads, can be misleading for this very difficult, yet fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, to understand. And yet, we conclude our liturgical year with this celebration of one of the most misunderstood ideas of our faith. Today, we do not celebrate an event, like Christmas, or Easter or even Pentecost, as we did last week. We are celebrating the core belief of our Christian theology.

We celebrate our belief in God and who God is, as we do each time we say the Creed.

We celebrate the very incomprehensibility of God and that God is not like us, is separate and different than us, evolved in ways we can never hope to be, perfect as we are, with our imperfect thinking, can never hope to understand.

We celebrate the Holy Trinity as central to our Christian identity, as we learn from God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit about who we are, and God’s truths about our relationships and human community.

We celebrate that God is mystery and can only be seen or felt spiritually and who inspires within us unmistakable awe, even with our lack of capacity for logical understanding.

All this being said, we can break down the doctrine of the Holy Trinty as a logical equation. We begin with the idea of that there is exactly One God, who is comprised of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Those of us who have studied through the Catechumenate can remember how we break it down. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God.

The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. Or, you could put it this way:

There is exactly one God with three really distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each of the persons is God.

All good. But watch out for these serious and common errors which try to depict what the Holy Trinity is not: The Trinity is not three individuals who together make One God. It is not three Gods joined together. It is not three properties of God.

It is One God in three persons: Father Son and Holy Spirit. Phew! Now that we have that straight, let us step back in awe at the amazing power of this Holy Trinity. All powerful, all creative, filled with love and grace, coming as wind and fire and peace.

And suddenly, before this very mystery and majesty of it all, we are left, bending the knees of our hearts in reverent worship and acknowledgment of the glory of the eternal Trinity, raising our voices in exuberant praise of the Unity of our God saying,

“Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; we will praise you and highly exalt you forever.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

“Glory to you, beholding the depths, in the high vault of heaven, glory to you.[[5]](#footnote-5)”

No matter where we are in our liturgies, we continue to lift up the Triune name of God. We began our service today, as we do every day with the opening sentence:
“Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” We return to our praise and exaltation in our Gloria, the scriptures we hear, the Creed, our prayers and hymns and our own person piety. We cross ourselves in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is the way I begin every homiletic moment, knowing that all that is said, is said only through, by and for the glory of God.

And within this and all the mysteries that are so profoundly deep that we can only become lost within them, we hear the reassuring words of Jesus explaining that our lack of understanding is only human, and that the Sprit of truth will come to each of us to guide us into the ways of all truth.

Yet, the Spirit does not work alone, “but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine”[[6]](#footnote-6) As Paul explained for us, “The Spirit bears witness to the Son…..and bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

We are the children by adoption and grace of the all powerful, all knowing and all present One God. No wonder we are bold to say “Our Father, who are in heaven!” We are united by the power of the Holy Spirit to the One Son who exists within he heart of the one Father. We are, therefore, not just the children of God in human terms we can begin to think we can make sense of, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are led directly into the heart of God, taking in the essence of Christ so that He may dwell in us as we in Him.

We have a prayer we pray on Wednesday’s as we enter into the study of St. Benedict. It is a prayer based the letter to the Ephesians.[[8]](#footnote-8) “…that being rooted and grounded in love, you may have the strength to comprehend … what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God.”

To be filled with the fullness of God is to find your strength in God, to keep Christ in your heart so that you will have the strength to grasp the meaning of Christ’s love, through the power of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with something is to be held by it, to be controlled by it, to be influenced by it. Thus, to be filled with the fullness of God is to be given over at every moment of your life to God’s controlling influence in your life: your thoughts, your feelings, your hopes and dreams, your relationships and your words and actions, your reactions, and where it is you lay your treasure or what it is that is your priority and value.

To be filled with the fullness of God, no matter your emotional state, or the reason for it, be it anger, loneliness, righteous indignation, they will not be allowed by you to control you. You are filled with the fullness of God, and you walk with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit’s guidance, you yield to God’s ever-present power and strength, to Jesus’ compassion and caring for the other.

To be filled with the fullness of God is not an overnight accomplishment. It takes time, and study, and prayer. Slowly and with intention, a gradual transformation will take place within you. It is an accumulation of nothing less than Holy Power that is released within us, as we make our way through our daily lives, struggling through the temptations of the world to stray away, to stay aware and in continuous communion with our One God.

The world will always be there to raise it’s quizzical eye in amusement at our doctrinal equation: 1 + 1+ 1 = 1 and its logical nonsensical impossibility.

Don’t try to understand it, or explain it as an arithmetic problem. In fact, don’t try to understand it, or explain it to anyone, or even yourself as a logical concept. To do so, or to feel the need to do so, is so very human. But God is not like us humans, and humans can only get into a real mess when they try to explain the Holy Trinity, or God, in human terms in the same way they explain other human being. We just can’t do it and that’s just alright. All God wants us to remember is that the truth of the mystery of God is simply beyond our human comprehension and that’s that.

The doctrine of the Trinity provides a simple glimpse into the mystery of the nature of God, rather than a full description of just who and what God is. We can simply stand in awe.

We are awed by the opportunity to recognize the works of God as we learn more and more about God in the Scriptures, throughout history and in the lives of those who have gone before, learning from the lessons they learned through the presence of God in their lives.

We are awed by the complexity of God, and we are compelled to worship the mystery of God, without thinking of God as hierarchical or one that can be logically understood.

We are awed by how we are beautifully and fearfully made in God’s image; that we are brought together in community through love of God; that our relationships hold within them the transforming power of God’s love and are filled with generosity and justice, which acknowledge and value differences and similarities within, accepting as well as giving.

Above all, we are awed that we can be filled so much with the utter fullness of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that we cannot help but overflow with God’s love and grace wherever we go and at any time or circumstance in our lives.

Imagine yourself dripping the holy stuff of God with every step you take, no matter what suffering or degradation the world throws at you. It is through being filled with the utter fullness of God, with the essence of each person we can endure, we can take on the character that God gives to every one of us, so that through this, and through the creative love of God, the love of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying love of the Holy Spirit, we find and share that sacred kind of hope that will never disappoint.

We believe in One God. And that one Triune God, that Three in One, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, ever-present, all knowing, all powerful God, will be faithful to us within the infinite mystery of all that God is today, as from the beginning of time, until the unending time of infinity that waits beyond.

Amen.

Written to the Glory of God

E. J. R. Culver+

June 12, 2022

1. Exodus 3:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Isaiah 45:5a [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Exodus 20:3-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cant. 13, BCP 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cant. 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John 16 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Romans 8:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Eph. 3:17-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)