

Looking Out My Window, May 20, 2024



Each year, the Sunday after Pentecost focuses on Holy Trinity by observing Trinity Sunday. That makes logical sense. Fifty days after the resurrection, on Pentecost Day, according to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out on Jesus' followers and brought Jesus' presence to them through the Spirit. They experienced that same unique presence they had known in Jesus. John's Gospel relates that Jesus breathed on the disciples shortly after the resurrection and gave them the Spirit (John 20:19-22).

That experience was so profound that they could refer to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit brought Jesus' presence to them. We speak of this moment as the birth of the Christian community as we know it. They began praying in Jesus' name and worshipping Jesus as divine. So, it feels appropriate for us to reflect on this central mystery of our faith on this particular Sunday.

My own views on Holy Trinity have changed in recent years. Previously, I focused on the oneness of God and found the mystery in the threeness. Now, I focus on the threeness and find the mystery in oneness. The triune God constitutes a communion of unity and love into which we are invited. John's Gospel especially underlines that. (See John 14:15-31, for example.) We actually dwell within the Triune God and the Triune God dwells within us.

At the risk of getting even more technical, we often are forced to use less than ideal language to express what we don't have adequate language to express—that is to engage in *cataphoresis*. Lutheran liturgical scholar Gail Ramshaw applies that term to our language about Trinity.

The fundamental *cataphoresis* in liturgical speech is Trinitarian language. There is a customary way for human speech to talk about a transcendent deity. But a transcendent deity who became incarnate in a specific man and who now lives manifest in human community, a unity in which three expressions are eternally active and without hierarchy: this is extremely difficult to say. [Gail Ramshaw, *Liturgical Language*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 38. 39.]

So, it's OK to struggle with this concept and the language. It's beyond the intellect, not anti-intellectual but supra-intellectual. And, it's OK to be bothered by the masculine language and to look for alternatives in our private and public, worship language. I find "God, Father and Mother of us all" helpful in private devotions. And, worship language that provides alternatives to the masculine imagery helps me as well.

This Sunday, May 27, we celebrate Trinity Sunday, the only Sunday bearing the name of a doctrine. I hope to see you there.

God's Peace,

David

David W Perkins+, Priest in Charge