

As the sign at the top of the Hymn Board reminds us, this is Trinity Sunday, the Sunday when we celebrate the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, one God manifested in Three Persons, coeternal, consubstantial. Scholars and theologians have spent countless years arguing about how this can be, and writing volumes of text trying to explain the concept.

Recently, The Rev. Kirk Alan Kubichek, a well-known and respected priest from the Diocese of Maryland, whom some of you know, wrote "*One of the challenges to proclamation on Trinity Sunday is that there are no Biblical passages that discuss the peculiar Christian understanding of God as three persons. The word in the creed is personas, like the mask Greek actors wear to play different characters. It is always the same person behind the three personas!*"ⁱ

He goes on to say that other monotheistic religions are baffled by the bold assertions of Christianity that the one true God of the Old Testament can be experienced as three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and still be only one God. They point to the scriptures and state that nowhere is there a clear statement that describes God as Triune, Three-in-One. And they are correct, there is no clear statement that describes God as three-in-one, but there are hints.

In the first chapter of Genesis, after God created the earth and the sky, the stars and the planets, the plants and all the animals, God said, '*Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness. . . so God created humankind in God's image and likeness, . . . male and female God created them.*

Today's reading from Isaiah uses similar language when the prophet quotes the Lord God as saying, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" Later in the 48th chapter of Isaiah, the Lord God speaks to the people of Israel in the first person, declaring himself to be the first and the last, the creator and the redeemer, and coming in person and in spirit to redeem the people, thought by many to be a foretelling of the coming of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the clearest language is in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus commands his disciples to "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" (Matt 28:19-20)

Each of our lessons today also offer a way to grasp the complexity of the Trinity, Triune God, creator, redeemer, and sanctifier.

The prophet Isaiah experiences a vision of God in the temple, sitting on a throne with seraphs in attendance, calling and singing to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah recognizes his own unworthiness in the presence of God's holiness, and is filled with fear. Yet, God blesses him, forgives his sins, and asks "who will go for us" offering Isaiah the opportunity to walk away, But the prophet, filled with God's grace and spirit answers, "here I am, send me." And leaves God's presence to carry God's message to the house of Jacob and all of Israel.

Our lessons from Paul's letter to the Romans and John's gospel, teach about God Incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This is God made man, the Son, the redeemer, who came to earth and took on human form so that we might come to know personally the divine love shared in the Godhead, and through his example become children of God and joint heirs of God's kingdom.

It is through the example of Jesus, that we model our relationships with each other. It is through Jesus that we become recipients of God's saving grace and meet the Spirit, the breath of God that was present at Creation and fills us from above. Through Baptism, we are washed in water and the Spirit, marked as God's own forever. We become sisters and brothers of Christ Jesus who was washed in the waters of baptism at the River Jordan and marked by the action of the Holy Spirit descending upon him like a dove, and the word of God declaring him to be God's Son in whom God was well-pleased.

Not only is the doctrine of the Trinity embedded in our Christian beliefs and recited in our prayers, but it guides every part of our lives. When we love others as we love our selves, we are living the covenantal relationship with God. When we act in ways that bring the light of Christ and the love of God into our personal relationships and our everyday life, when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the imprisoned, we are carrying God's love to those to whom we minister. When we pray, when we worship God and partake in the sacraments, when we do all in our power to be God's hands and feet on earth, we are doing those good works which are the right and proper response to God's eternal love and are sanctified through the power of the Holy Spirit that guides us.

But ultimately, when you come right down to it, our understanding of God is a relational one. We can read, and discuss all we want, but it is not until we really experience God in God's various forms that we begin to understand.

Maybe the doctrine of the Trinity is best not explained but simply experienced as God's eternal and life-giving love that surrounds us, guides us and makes us God's own. The God who meets us at the table to give us the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation, the God who is in us and among us, using us to share the good news, the God who infuses our lives in mysterious and surprising ways, that is the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

On this day when we witness the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, and with him learn that God, as Father, offers us boundless love, God the Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, gives us the gift of eternal life, and God the Holy Spirit, fills our hearts, minds, and very being, infusing us with grace and God's abiding love, let us always remember to share that love in word and deed with each other, and with those beyond our walls who need to know the joy of God's all abiding and sustaining love. *Amen*

ⁱ <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sermon/you-will-see-yourself-trinity-sunday-b-may-30-2021/>