

Trinity Sunday

One of the things we often hear in times of domestic, local or international crisis is that “everyone pulled together.” We are rightly proud, and a few times amazed, at how people can set aside their differences and strive for the common good. Sometimes this experience of working together has the long-lasting benefit of breaking down boundaries. Other times, sadly, old enmities, prejudices, and suspicions return when the crisis is over.

Trinity Sunday celebrates that whether we are in crisis or not, in season and out of season, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do nothing but “pull together” to love and save us. What we glimpse as the best attribute of our family, town, or nation defines who our Christian God is, and what they see, how they judge, and the way they act toward the world.

A famous icon of the Trinity depicts the three persons at a table where there are four place settings. The final place, in the lower half of the painting, invites the viewer to take the seat and join them. It’s profound theology and masterful art, but we can quickly misunderstand it.

We are not just personally invited to join in the very life of God, and pull together with them in their loving and saving of the world. The seat at the table is reserved for all of humanity.

In practical terms it is impossible to profess belief in the Trinity, on the one hand, and then work at things which pull the human family apart, on the other. It is scandalous to hold to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and be known as racist, bigoted, and sexist, to not care about refugees or those who die each day of starvation. We cannot keep signing ourselves in the name of a Triune God and then work hard at getting richer and more secure while the rest of humanity grow poorer and lack the necessities for human dignity. Ghandi once said, “I love the New Testament and the Christian ideas about God and I would take the waters of Christian baptism tomorrow if I saw Christians practice what they preach.”

Trinity Sunday is not about theological mathematics, working out how three goes into one. It’s about gaining the strength at this Eucharist to pull together to see that all of God’s children have the opportunity to hear the good news of how much God loves us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and so can take their privileged place at God’s table. Most people will learn about the saving love of God primarily through the way they observe us seeing, judging, and acting.

It’s not by accident that in our Catholic tradition the usual moment we invoke the Trinity is when we make the sign of the cross. It reminds us that “we cannot have our cake and eat it too.” Every time we profess the Trinity we recommit ourselves to die to self so that God’s saving love may be realized for everyone, everywhere.

So let’s not only profess our belief in the three persons that make up our one God, but live the life that goes with it, “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

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