

*Sermon for Trinity Sunday
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Holy Nativity, Plano
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Today is Trinity Sunday, when we celebrate the Holy Trinity. All over the country, terrified young curates are being prodded into pulpits by cowardly rectors to face the awkward task of trying to explain the concept of the Trinity. It's brutal.

I am not so concerned with explaining the concept. I am more concerned with simply asserting it. It's a part of what God has revealed to us through Jesus. It's quite clear that there are three entities all of whom are part of the one God of the Bible. How that can be is more a matter for speculation by ivory tower theologians. So if the concept is a stumbling block for you, then by all means pray through it, read about it, wrestle with it. But whatever you do, don't explain it away.

You see, the problem with a Unitarian God is that he has no one to love. If God exists from eternity by himself, then how is he love? He has no beloved. There can be no love without someone to love. You could say that God loved himself, and therefore we should love ourselves as well. And I would be fine with that. But if that's all there is, then it leaves us loving ourselves without loving anyone else.

The stubborn truth about God, however, is that all three persons of the Holy Trinity are eternal. That means that each of them has always had someone else to love. That which is eternal is actually a relationship between three entities. So when we say that God is love, we don't just mean that a single solitary God felt like sharing existence with other things and other beings, as if he were insufficient in and of himself. Instead, we mean that the love between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit was so indescribably complete and satisfying that they decided to bring other being into existence in order to share in that loving relationship that they had before the beginning of the world.

And so we have hints of this divine relational interior even in the first chapter of Genesis. God is spoken of as a singular being. But God sometimes speaks in the plural: "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." Is that simply a conventional use of the "royal we"? Perhaps, but which came first, the convention, or the use? Even in the first verse of the bible, we hear of the Spirit of God "moving over the face of the waters". And how does God create? By speaking. God creates through his Word. So we have God, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, all right there at the beginning.

Now we need to be careful here. I'm not saying that the concept of the Trinity is self-evident from this passage. It's not as though the Jews are stupid for

not seeing this. We must remember that God spent about a millennium after this passage was written, just convincing his chosen people that there is only one God. It's only in the revelation of Jesus that this concept becomes inevitable. But it's not a radical departure, just a development that makes sense of even more of what God has revealed all along.

When we were baptized, we were not dedicated to a God who is like some middle-eastern potentate, who moves his people like pieces on a chessboard. We were drawn into the love of God, we died with Christ and received the grace of his resurrection, we were enrolled in the fellowship that comes from God the Holy Spirit working in us. All of the Christian life is about being in relationship with God, participating in the divine love that the Trinity had before creation, the love that drove God to create everything that is.

And our mission is to let that loving relationship overflow from us into the world, drawing others into the relationship for which they were made. "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." There is still only one God. Notice that we baptize in *the name* (singular) of the Holy Trinity, not the *names*. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not the names of God. They are indicators of the three persons within God. But they are so completely unified that they share a name.

The love that was before the world began invites all of creation into fellowship with itself. I suppose there are reasons why some will want to refuse the invitation. But those who have accepted will want to pass the invitation on to others.