

## TRINITY SUNDAY, June 15, 2025, Year C

- On this Feast of the Holy Trinity, I invite you to think about **love**... *But not just any kind* of love – like how one person might love Chinese food, and another loves reading about the Civil War. Think about ‘*people-love*,’ the kind of love we have for people. When it comes to *people-love*, what we really hope for is not something *abstract*, but rather something *intimate and particular*. Consider the example of a woman who hopes for a long-term relationship with a certain man. As she gets to know him, she discerns that something is *not quite right*. Because he seems to be in love *with the experience of love*, rather than *with her*! For the kind of *people-love* that we value is *concrete and particular*, rather than abstract and generic. “I love you” means something *different* from “I love *my idea* of you,” or, “I love what you represent!”
- This point underlies the old throw-away line, that ‘God so loved the world that *he did not send a committee*.’ Instead, as John’s Gospel memorably says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...” Nor did God send us a *concept* or a *theory*. God sent us **a person**, and God gave us **a relationship** with him. *Why?* Because the Creator’s goal has always been to draw us into a closer relationship with God’s own being. This is a rather different goal than if God had simply wanted *us* to have *more knowledge or understanding about* the divine being.
- The *basic distinction* I am exploring here, is this: on one hand, we **know someone by personally engaging with them**. On the other hand, we **know about someone**, which is *derivative* and *impersonal*. Knowing **about** you is not the same as **knowing you**! The same distinction applies to the difference between our *love for a particular person*, and our *favorable impression* of her or him. Either way, this distinction is fundamental to our faith, and has everything to do with God’s Trinitarian nature.

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- In view of all this, some churches take a risk by using a particular kind of altar frontal. These frontals feature a traditional symbol for God's Trinitarian nature. This symbol depicts a triangle and three circles. This image centers on how 'God is One being in three persons.' Though the *symbolism* on such emblems may be *true*, it is also *misleading*! Because, by making use of a *diagram* to refer to God's nature, we portray God's personal being as if it was a *thing*. Diagramming what we learn and know about God is *not* the same thing as *knowing God*, through our love-relationship with our Creator. An even greater danger comes from literally *pointing* to a visual symbol of the divine nature - as when in Sunday school our teacher might point to a cloverleaf diagram. When we *point* to something, we *point outside ourselves* to what is *beyond ourselves*. Yet, after Baptism, God is *not* just *outside* or *around* us. God is now *within* us.
- Here is a very plain way to express the spiritual significance of all this. **When we pray, we don't simply pray to God. We pray with and through God!** As Paul tells us, "when we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit..." This is because, when we pray "*to* the Father," we also pray *with* and *through* the Son. And we are enabled to pray with and through the Son because of our Baptism. For after Baptism, we pray in the Holy Spirit. We therefore pray to God not '*from the outside*,' but '*from the inside*' of God's own being and nature!
- Well, how can this be? As we remember, every Eucharistic Prayer in the Prayer Book has a *common shape*. For all of our Eucharistic Prayers are prayed to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. *This is not an accident*. Jesus modeled this in his own life, and particularly at the last supper. Repeating his pattern at that supper, we stand with him around the same table. And by his graceful invitation, we join his prayer to the Father. Our prayer *with* him, *to* the Father, *is in* the power of the Spirit, the same Spirit he spoke about at that table.

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- Jesus modeled at the Last Supper what grace means in practice. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, *Jesus now shares with us his own particular intimacy* with the Father. Inviting us to stand with him as he prays, he offers the whole world back to the Father-Creator. By this, Jesus fulfills Adam and Eve's *intended-but-failed* vocation of stewardship. *This is also our vocation*, to offer up to our Father all that truly belongs to the Creator. Sharing *in* the grace of the Holy Spirit allows us to join Jesus, the Son, in his Eucharistic vocation.
- And so, a good way we can grow in our awareness of **the saving implications of God's Trinitarian nature**, is to do *some creative imagining*. Imagine that, in this moment, Jesus reaches out his hand to us. In reaching out his hand, he does not simply extend his *greeting*. Extending his hand, *he invites us to join him by standing with him*, closely at his side. By his invitation, and our acceptance of it, he shares with us his own intimate and particular relationship with our Father. And with this invitation, he gives us the graced power of the Spirit, making it *a reality*. Because the invitation comes from him, the power of the Spirit is God's he shares with us is God's grace-filled power. Jesus makes all this *real* and *true*, whether we feel it or not.
- ***This Trinitarian shape of prayer*** is different from how we usually imagine prayer. *Commonly*, we think of prayer as our communication **to** God. When we feel aware of God and close to God, we speak **to** God, of what is good and well, and of that for which we feel thankful. And we often ask for help. *But*, when there seems to be a veil between us and God, we speak to God with lament and we complain, sometimes in anger. This concept and experience of prayer is '*subjective*.' That is, it is a concept of prayer based on *our* personal, *interior*, experience. It reflects our experience of being *the subjects of perception and action*.

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- Yet, as we learn *from* Jesus, and *by* the Holy Spirit, *true prayer is not something we do*, which we somehow manage to *achieve* through our faithfulness, devotion and energy. True prayer is something we *allow God to do within us*. True prayer is the kind of praying that we find God already making real within us and through us, in the grace-filled power of the Holy Spirit. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are constantly engaged with one another, in what the Eastern Christian tradition calls ‘a dance,’ a *perichoresis*. Prayer involves being drawn into this dance. Prayer is *sharing in* the Trinitarian relational being of God. Prayer is being drawn *into* the community of fellowship that exists within God’s own being.
- This Trinitarian pattern of our lives rests upon the Trinitarian shape of our prayers. We can *accept Jesus’ invitation* to stand with him. We then experience his own fellowship with the Father, in the grace-filled power of the Holy Spirit. We are then enabled to live *truly*. To live truly, is to live *to* the Father. It is to live *with* and *through* the Son. And true prayer is to live *in* the power of the Holy Spirit.