

**Trinity Sunday, Year B**  
**Isaiah 6:1-8**  
**Romans 8:12-17**  
**John 3:1-17**

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

This is Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after our celebration of Pentecost. Today we are asked to think about and meditate on a mystery past human comprehension: how our God can be both one God, holy and indivisible, and at the same time, three persons – Creator, Savior and Spirit. Even the great theologian, St. Augustine of Hippo, said that the mystery of the Trinity was beyond him!

In the back of our prayer book, in the Catechism that outlines our faith as Episcopalians, the Trinity is given a single question and answer. (You can look at this on page 852 if you want.)

*Q: What is the Trinity?*

*A: The Trinity is one God: Father Son and Holy Spirit*

By comparison, there are five questions about the Father, nine about Jesus and the Holy Spirit receives five. So there's evidently a lot more we know about the persons of God than about the wholeness of God. This makes sense to me, as we are persons. Our human experience is based upon our personhood.

Yet here we are on Trinity Sunday, celebrating the oneness of God, with descriptions of the persons of God and how they act and interact to weave us into a new relationship with God.

Isaiah points us in the direction of adoration as our proper response to the fullness of God. In his vision, he saw seraphs, angels with six wings, calling out their praise to God. Paul's letter to the Church in Rome describes the way in which, through Jesus and the Spirit, we hold our right to God as Father. And Jesus tells Nicodemus in John's gospel that what Paul calls a "spirit of adoption" is like being re-born as a child of God. And it all seems rather confusing and imprecise. The physics of it are elusive, and the metaphysics are way beyond our comprehension.

So what is there about the Triune nature of God that we, "this congregation here present" at the end of May, 2015 can learn?

There is a famous icon painted by Andrei Rublev, for the Cathedral of the Trinity near Moscow in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It shows the three angels who appeared to Abram and told him that he and Sarai would be the parents of a child in their old age. It also has been taken since its earliest days, as a depiction of the Trinity of God.

Some of you may know it. Three figures with golden auras around their heads are seated in conversation as they mutually bless a chalice on the low table

before them. While the one on the left is clearly most senior – the other two are bending their heads and leaning toward him as he speaks – it is also clear that there is an equality and mutual love shared by the three. They are part of something larger, a community of presence that is holy and inclusive.

Much has been made of the rich colors and symbolism of this icon. One commentator called it a “theology in color” that shows us visually what such a sacred community looks like. And perhaps that is what we can learn more about.

True community is sacred. In it, we are allowed and encouraged to be the person we are and are becoming, in the best sense of self-awareness and personal growth. In such a community with its assurance of safety and security, there are enough resources for our well-being. Respect and trust blossom in such a community. Children are raised, young adults learn life-skills, young families are nurtured, the able help the less able, and the sick and elderly participate in community life as valued members. This is the world that Jesus does not condemn, but comes to save, because it is deeply worth saving.

Is it one that we are squandering? Or is it one that we try hard, here at St. Paul's and in other congregational settings, to create and strengthen? Think about our Church school, our parish picnic, and the camping trip. This is what sacred community looks and feels like. This is where we will find God's Trinity.

What is sacred community in an electronic sphere? When human interaction is increasingly mediated – yes, that is an intentional pun – by social networks, what does the Trinity teach us? If we gaze at Rublev's icon, and see the deep absorption of the three persons pictured in it, we know they would not trade the holy interaction among them for an electronic version of it. It is real, present and palpable.

Yes, we know more about those with whom we share social media and in many good ways are more interactive with them than ever before. But we long for something more – tactile, physical, rich with sounds, smells and present to our bodily senses. We humans are made in the image and likeness of God, and we long for community, as the Trinity of persons in God long for, and are completed in each other.

We very often learn more about something by thinking about what it is not.

Recently I learned something new about the word “idiot.” It has come to mean a state of mental deficiency, but the root word is Greek, and refers to the self, the separated, private self. Think of two words that are related to it – idol and idiosyncrasy: both point us to an aspect of being caught within a separated and set-apart quality of life.

Being an “idiot” means putting one's own wants and needs ahead of the community's. Being an idiot means acting in such a way as to endanger the whole,

regardless of its consequences. It is what the governor of New Jersey and the mayor of Philadelphia urged people not to do in the face of Sandy. “Don’t be an idiot!” they urged the residents of the area. “Evacuate if you know you are in an area prone to flooding!”

You see, what they were saying, is be respectful of those who will be in danger as a result of your actions. Do not put your own selfish desires ahead of the good of the community as a whole. It is good advice for us all, all of the time.

If we wish to build and nurture the community in which we and our fellow humans – all made in the image and likeness of God—“live and move and have our being” we will not act like idiots. If we want to honor God’s creation, we will not be idiots. “Idiocy” may well be the opposite of community.

Community is all of us together, as Jesus said –one flock, one Shepherd. Does Trinity equal community for you? Does idiocy mean “my way or the highway?”

Perhaps that is what the Trinity of God’s three persons can teach us. Community and creation are made of God’s mutual love and respect, and we are made to be part of it. This is why Jesus and the Holy Spirit have come, so that the invitation into their own sacred community may be with us today.

May this Trinity Sunday bring you ever more closely into God’s community of love. **Amen.**