

Trinity Sunday  
May 26, 2013

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31  
Canticle 13  
Romans 5:1-5  
JOHN 16:12-15

## THE MYSTICAL HOLY TRINITY

The core Christian doctrine that God is one God in three persons can be expressed or approached in several ways. Great truths like this can be expressed and remembered beautifully and succinctly through hymns -- and we will do this today. The concept of the Holy Trinity can be expressed visually, as St. Patrick did in his preaching to the Irish, when he held up a shamrock and said that the Holy Trinity is akin to a shamrock with three distinct lobes but one in being and purpose.

The concept of the Holy Trinity can be expressed by saying, as I have in a Trinity Sunday sermon, that even God cannot be God without *relationships* within God's own self as well as with us. Therefore, as the poet John Donne said, it is also true that "no man is an island entire of itself," but that to be truly and fully human we need to have a number of healthy relationships; thriving in isolation is impossible.

The concept of the Holy Trinity can be expressed intellectually. One year when I wrote a Trinity Sunday sermon in the manner of one of my Theology professors at seminary, I discovered I wasn't really very good at this approach. The congregation listened to the sermon and looked dazed and glazed, and afterwards a couple of people (who had graduate degrees) told me they appreciated my effort to explain this very difficult concept. That told me that I probably had not done a good job of preaching that day. That is the last time I have tried that approach.

The concept of the Holy Trinity can also be expressed or experienced *mystically*, and that is the approach I would like to take today, based on something that "came to me," the way mystical experiences do, when I was on retreat recently. So that you may focus in your own imaginations on picturing the pictures I will describe to you in this guided meditation, I invite you to close your eyes and let your imaginations embrace the pictures I will offer you. [Pause.]

Imagine that you are floating, as it seems, in complete and utter darkness, without so much as a glimmer of any light, artificial or natural. Total, complete, inky blackness, and total, complete silence so that for a moment you might wonder if you have become totally blind and deaf.

The only one of your five senses which is working at all is touch, which becomes much more acute in the absence of the other senses. You feel like you are being bumped into ever so slightly all over your body by millions of the tiniest imaginable particles. These teensy tiny collisions are irregular in timing and location all over your body and seem to be completely random and purposeless.

Then suddenly you can *hear* something. You can only describe it as a voice, singing, though it's not like any voice you have ever heard before. No human voice could possibly have a range of so many octaves, and indeed sometimes it sounds like three voices singing in a marvelous interwoven pattern so beautiful it brings tears to your eyes. Sometimes you can make out three voices and sometimes they are one voice yet keeping its -- or their -- extraordinary range and variety. And then you realize that in fact you are not hearing a human voice at all, but The Voice -- or Voices?

Then the singing abruptly stops and the Voice speaks in one short, declarative sentence: a command, in fact, yet one so sweetly issued that you feel as if the random molecules which have been colliding with you are quivering with eagerness to obey. At the end of this short, declarative sentence LIGHT bursts out all around you and you cover your eyes. It is light brighter than the light used by an ophthalmologist doing an exam of the retina of an eye, and it is all around you. It is orders of magnitude brighter than any light you have ever experienced just as the previous dark was orders of magnitude darker than any dark you had ever experienced.

And then you realize that you are no longer being bumped by random molecules. The molecules all around you all have Purposes, they are *becoming* things, and are in fact awaiting further instructions. You can hear the Voice -- or are they three Voices ? -- singing again. The Light has become bearable and indeed it has become lights, plural. You see vast clouds of brilliance which, like watching a video on fast-forward, resolve into galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses.

And then, for the first time, you have a sense of "up" and "down" because you feel yourself being pulled -- down? up? -- toward one particular star in the suburbs of one particular galaxy out of millions, one particular middle-sized star which has planets forming in orbit around it while comets and meteors whiz through their midst. You are

drawn close to this star but not too close, “just right” you say to yourself, and then your heart leaps because you realize that you are approaching the third planet from this star.

You watch eons pass in moments as you are drawn -- or *sent* -- to this planet. The planet cools from its frothy, molten state and a single moon appears from around the other side of the planet from you. As you are sent closer you can see that, yes, most of the planet is now *blue*. Other parts are green, brown, and white, and the four colors grow and shrink rapidly and move around as you watch, and then the changes slow down and finally stabilize as you are sent closer to the planet. You are sent closer and closer, coming down just above one end -- that would be the north side -- of Africa, and to the eastern end of -- yes, that’s the Mediterranean Sea.

The clouds obscure your view while you plummet quickly and peacefully down. There really is such a thing as “down” now, but it’s more like being in an Imax Theatre with a movie filmed with the ultimate zoom lens than entry into the Earth’s atmosphere while in bodily form would be.

Gently, ever so softly, you land -- on a beach, next to a lake on a glorious day in late spring. You dig your toes into the wet sand and start to look around --you have a body now! -- when you see a muscular, bearded, swarthy young man walking vigorously toward you. He calls you by name and picks you up with a massive hug as easily as if you were the size of a six year old. He laughs with delight at greeting you and you also laugh, laugh until you cry.

Then he whispers something special just for your ears and finally adds, “Wait. Wait here. Wait for *Her*. Spirit. Wind. *Ruach*.”

He vanishes, but before you can mourn his departure you hear a wind. A tiny waterspout comes off the lake and makes a hole in the sand right next to you, a hole just big enough to accept a seed which another breeze immediately delivers to the hole. A third breeze blows gently into the hole and covers it, and then suddenly a TREE surges up out of what was a little hole in the sand, a gorgeous tree which spreads its branches (you duck just in time), flowers and fruits in a matter of moments.

You see that the tree bears nine different kinds of fruit and, helpfully, each one is labelled: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” They are all mouth-wateringly tasty to look at, but as you reach out to pick one and open your mouth, a little puff of wind blows an identical seed into your open mouth and you swallow it.

You're startled, and afraid that perhaps a tree will grow inside *you*, but instead another puff of wind blows -- *into* you. It blows into all of your pores, helping that seed grow, and suddenly you feel more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, generous, faithful, gentle and self-controlled. A third breeze blows on you and you say to yourself, "Wow, I want to *share* these fruits" and you open your eyes and you are back in your pew at Christ Church, New Brunswick, eager to share the fruits of the Spirit and all of your experiences of the Trinity in a world which is hungry for meaning and purpose, including yours.

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