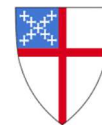




Sermon for the First Sunday After Pentecost May 31, 2026



St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene
Ian Hicks

Genesis 1:1-2:4a 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 Matthew 28:16-20 Psalm 8

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love.

During a confirmation class at St. Paul's in Newark, NJ, the Archdeacon asked the children for a definition of the Holy Trinity. One young girl answered very softly, "The Holy Trinity is three Persons, in one God." The archbishop who was almost deaf replied "What, I didn't understand what you said. "The young girl wasn't fazed a bit, she simply gave a lovely smile and replied, "You're not supposed to understand. The Holy Trinity is a mystery!"¹

What a delightful answer. Can it really be that simple?

We could try delving into the details and nuances of the Trinity, but perhaps some of us might inadvertently start snoring! So where should we go from here?

A woman of deep faith, Dr. Toni Craven, a lecturer at Brite Divinity School, started her course with a simple impactful statement: "Here's where the story begins. Genesis 1:27. Remember this, if you remember nothing else. God created humanity in God's image, Imago Dei, therefore, each and every one of us, and by extension, every other person who had gone before, is with, or will come after us, bears a piece, a God-piece within, and if we have any intention of knowing the fullness of God, we might better spend some time collecting all these God-pieces to put together a beautiful mosaic that might in fact begin to touch the face of God."¹

Our belief in God helps us to visualize a beautiful mosaic. Given our belief, God is an eternal nonviolent dance of joy, comprising mutual giving and receiving in the spirit of

love. Given that we live in a culture of hyper-individualism we might be surprised to be reminded that the universe in which we live, from subatomic particles to solar systems exists in interdependent relationships. This suggests we are not so much individuals, but more inter-individuals, dependent on one another for our identity and for our actual existence.³ In this, our human condition we could consider the Trinity as wrapping our minds around an image of God as Parent, Child, and Holy Spirit? As we grapple with this, keep in mind that every Sunday we read the Nicene Creed together, which begins:

“We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.”

God the Father, the Almighty who literally made everything that we know in this world of ours. Everything. Our world and those we don't like, and that and those we do like. We focus with joy on our understanding of religion and worship, just as do those who worship differently, such as Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, who focus with joy on their understanding of religion and worship. Thinking about this, we really are inter-individuals interdependent and intertwined with each other.² How do we move forwards to touch the face of God, celebrate that God is love and celebrate the dance of joy?

Afterall, God created humankind in God's image, male and female, black, and white, brown, yellow, pink, and red; Jewish, and Muslim, and Hindu, and Buddhist, and Atheist, and Agnostic, and yes, even Christian, God created them; In the image of God, Imago Dei, God created every single one of them!

The question arises: Why was Jesus born of Mary and why was he sent? Could it be that after God had created us, he realized that we have difficulties grasping something we cannot see. So, Jesus arrived and we had someone tangible to help us understand. Then when he ascended into heaven, we read the disciples were somewhat lost and didn't recognize the risen Christ when he appeared amongst them. It took them a while to realize the spirit was right there with them, just as it is here with us now.

How about wording it this way: the Father **wills**, the Son **shapes that will for us**, and the Spirit **empowers us to respond to it**. We live with vast divisions in our so badly divided world. Yet surely our unity in Christ supercedes every division among human beings? How do we reach out in loving service to those suffering from the insidious effects of division? Jesus was all about acting with love and mercy, not talk and empty promises.⁴

Bonhoeffer comments on us being human together. If we are made in God's image, then surely, we are made to be in relationship with others?

When just 21 years old, Bonhoeffer's first doctoral dissertation was the *Sanctorum Communio*, the "communion of the saints". The basic conclusion was that the Church, the *Sanctorum Communio*, is Christ existing as community. This isn't completely new, keeping in mind that Paul in his writings talked about the Church as "the body of Christ" several times in the New Testament. Bonhoeffer expressed this as theological sociology. "Human beings exist in relation, just as God exists in relation; but human beings existing in a certain type of relation, namely the Church, **is Christ existing in relation!** Christ exists in the world today through the community of the saints."

This seems straightforward enough. However, there is a slight complication. God gave us freedom of choice. We can choose whether or not to ignore or to harm someone, or whether to pay attention to someone and do good. However, every single relationship is mediated through Christ: ("What you have done for the least of these, you have done to me.")⁵

In reading his book "Love is the Way" Bishop Curry expresses his total conviction that love is the key to life. We also know that Michael Curry has a wonderful sense of humor. His love of God, life and people comes through in his sermons. Those of you who've been fortunate enough to see and hear him in person must surely have been uplifted and excited at his almost playfulness when preaching, such is his love of God, life and people. A few years back he got excited at a revival meeting and said the following: "Many of us are Episcopalians, many of us are from other Christian traditions and families. Many of

us are people of good will of no particular denomination or stripe. Some of us are probably Republicans. And some of us are probably Democrats. Some of us are probably independents. But all of us are children of God. All of us! All of us! We come together as the children of God. Like that old song used to say when I was a kid,

*Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in his sight.”*

He then suggested that “the opposite of love is not hatred, but in fact the opposite of love is selfishness, and hatred is a derivative of selfishness. Perhaps selfishness, or self-centeredness, that false, self-centered pride that puts you or me in the center of the world, and you, me and God and everybody else on the periphery, that’s selfishness. It is the root of all evil. Maybe this is the source of every wrong. It is behind every bigotry. It is behind every injustice. It is the root cancer of every war. It is the source of every destruction. That selfishness destroys homes! It will destroy churches! It will destroy nations! And left untethered, it will destroy creation! Selfishness!”²

Eugene Peterson adds depth to this, writing: “... we have all been trained from the cradle to choose for ourselves what is best for us. We enter adulthood with the working assumption that whatever we need and want and feel forms the divine control center of our lives.”

“This puts a different perspective to prayer as well, because prayer is not asking for what we think we want, but asking to be changed in ways unimaginable. To become more grateful, more able to see good. And when prayer is answered it is never in the way that we expect!”⁶

But we have the opportunity of living life to the fullest! Love brings us together, heals wounds, lifts us up. It is a source that sets us free. It is the root source of life and the reason we are here!”

We get it. God loves us. But how do we appear to God? Bishop Curry tells the story of getting ready to take his 3-year-old daughter Elizabeth to school. Nearly time to go and he says “Elizabeth, put your raincoat on.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s going to rain later.”

“But it’s not raining now. Mommy didn’t say it was going to rain!” (Hmmm, we should remember the line of authority at home!)

“I know mommy didn’t say it was going to rain, but Al Roker did.”

Then it hit him: why am I discussing this with a 3-year-old? I spent more time in seminary than she has been alive. And as for trying to explain who the weather forecaster is. I simply said, “Elizabeth, just go put your raincoat on.”

“That’s when I realized that she thought she knew more than I did. And maybe that’s how God thinks when looking at us!”²

How do we move forwards to touch the face of God, celebrate that God is love and celebrate the dance of joy? Do we get the Trinity? If the Father **wills**, the Son **shapes that will for us**, and the Spirit **empowers us to respond to it**. Do we get it? We can try to live it. As the little girl said to the Archdeacon: “You’re not supposed to understand. The Holy Trinity is a mystery!”¹

Amen

- 1) Deacon Owen: Holy Trinity, St Paul’s Abbey, Newton, NJ. January 18, 2015
- 2) Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s sermon from the General Convention Revival at the Palmer Events Center on July 7, 2018
- 3) Adam Ericksen: The Trinity and God’s Nonviolent Atonement, blogging at the Raven Foundation
- 4) Reverend Dr. Warren Crews *co-priest in charge at St. John’s Episcopal Church, Tower Grove*
- 5) Summarized from Jeff Wheelden in *Ethic is Theology* Jan 7, 2013
- 6) Brad Hambrick: <https://bradhambrick.com/an> interesting quote from Eugene Peterson on the trinity/ Jan 20, 2015.