



I should therefore bring you profound explorations of Trinitarian doctrine. But I am not that kind of preacher, just as I will not chant parts of the Eucharistic prayers (out of kindness really).

Here is a story about the Trinity, attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo. *Saint Augustine, the African bishop and theologian of the early 5th century, spent many years writing about God as a Trinity of Persons, a mystery which both consumed his attention and yet eluded his understanding. So the story goes, he was walking by the seaside one day, meditating on the Trinity, how God could be One essence, and yet, at the same time, three Persons. He came onto a little child. The child had dug a small hole in the sand, and with a seashell was scooping water from the ocean into the hole. Augustine watched him for a little while and finally asked the child what he was doing. The child answered that he wanted to scoop all the water from the sea and pour it into the hole in the sand. Augustine felt impelled to correct the child. "That is impossible," Augustine said. "The sea is too large and the hole is too small." And now it was this child who was impelled to correct Augustine. The child said, "That is true, but I will sooner draw all the water from the sea and empty it into this hole than you will succeed in penetrating the mystery of the Holy Trinity with your limited understanding." Augustine turned away in amazement, and when he looked back, the child had disappeared. Augustine had been put in his place, not a bad place, but simply in a place of recognition that he, too, was a child of God, a God whom he would mysteriously experience but never fully understand.* (sermon by Br. Curtis Almquist, SSJE, June 7, 2020)

We gather in church to bow down before mysteries, to celebrate and to be humbled, and to encourage one another on our various journeys of faith.

Our lessons this morning, you may have noticed, are all particularly brief. Maybe they are pointers rather than explanations. So what mysteries are being pointed to this morning?

Our first lesson, from Proverbs, presents the Wisdom of God personified as a beautiful woman. She appears in many places: *on the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads*. That is, we encounter her everywhere. This Wisdom is standing beside God and was involved in all the aspects of Creation. She acts, according to Scripture, "*like a master worker*", carrying out the plans of the designer.

We find at the end of this lesson, something unexpected and beautiful: Wisdom says, *“I was daily (God’s) delight, rejoicing before (God) always, rejoicing in (God’s) inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”* The relationship between Creation – us – and God is one of mutual delight. God’s delight in us – in you and me and all Creation – is at the heart of the mystery of God.

The familiar Gospel verse “For God so loved the world. . .” can also be translated ‘For God so delighted in the world . . .’ Our God, the God of the Bible, does not look upon us with judgement or disappointment or anger. God looks upon each one of us with love – God delights in you, even when you don’t feel or act so delightfully yourself.

To hear and understand our Epistle lesson from Romans, we need to remember that faith is not a matter of believing the right doctrines, thinking the right thoughts, or of proclaiming the right words. (Any more than the Trinity is a concept to be analyzed and dissected.) Faith is about relationship. It is a matter of trust. So as Paul says, we are justified by our faith or trust or relationship with God, and with Jesus.

Faith is about relationship, and relationships – including loving ones, and the relationship of Fatherhood and parenting generally – all relationships involve suffering as well as joy. We grow in faith through suffering and enduring – hanging in when life is tough. Through endurance, our character can be deepened and matured. And with a mature character develops hope, a hope which is not simply optimism or expecting specific results but is based in relationship and experience, in mysteries beyond ourselves. All this forming and growing in faith is ultimately a gift as well, “because God’s love (is being) poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” And that is a mystery as well.

Jesus acknowledges in our Gospel that we don’t yet understand such mysteries – and that is OK. We grow in understanding as God’s Holy Spirit guides us – seeing through a glass dimly then more and more, beginning as children with simple food then maturing and taking on more complex and nuanced food and understanding. Meanwhile, we walk the paths we are on, and we encourage one another in living the mysteries of God and of life.

These are marvelous mysteries for Trinity Sunday,:

- God delighting in you and me, such as we are, knowing us better than we dare admit to ourselves.
- Being justified – having place and standing in the world, in this life, in our own skin – simply through our relationship with God, by virtue of the grace of God caring for us.
- The encouragement that there is much we do not know or understand but that we shall continue to grow in faith and love, in understanding and in service, even beyond what we can ask or imagine.

I would like to offer you a suggestion for some reading about the mystery of God. Gregory Boyle is a Jesuit priest in Los Angeles who founded Homeboy Industries, the largest gang-intervention, rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world. He has 3 books, and a number of talks and interviews you can find on the internet. The first book is sub-titled “The power of boundless compassion”. The third is subtitled “The power of extravagant tenderness.” His insight – utterly Biblical and spiritually grounded – is that we are all good, and God delights in every one of us. We forget who we are, we get lost in trauma and pain, and we can help one another rediscover the dignity and glory of being who we are as beloved children of God. This mystery is simple, and therefore hard to grasp. He is a storyteller, out of his own experience. I comment them to you as challenging theological reading.

The early Christians referred to the Gospel and our liturgical worship as mysteries. Let us marvel this morning at this mystery as we hear it and as we participate in it through the sacrament of Holy Communion, in bread and wine, that we show forth the Glory and love of God in this secular Northwest which desperately needs such Good News.

Let us be witnesses, as we are able – pointers, if you will, of our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. One God, experienced by us in all sorts of ways, who at the root of it all, loves each of us and delights in everyone of us, beyond what we can ever imagine. How could that be, that God delights in every one? It is a mystery. Amen.