

Homily for Trinity Sunday

May 26-27, 2018

Readings: Deuteronomy 4: 32-34, 39-40; Romans 8:14-17; Matthew 28: 16-20

Preacher: Margot Van Etten

You might wonder what a “theological feast” has to do with any significant part of your life. At a time when increasing numbers of people say that “organized religion” is irrelevant to them, why would anyone preach about, or devote a whole Sunday to, something so abstruse? Does doctrine—even one as central as this—really constitute “news you can use?”

Well, yes. If we look deeply enough, this doctrine –this way of understanding God as Trinity, three-in-one, has profound relevance. I believe that it points to something immense and even shocking, something that has the power to offer guidance, hope and healing for the poisonous atmosphere infecting so much of our culture today.

The readings show each of the *persons* of the trinity: the father delivering Israel from Egypt, the Spirit empowering us to be children of God, and the Son sending his disciples forth just before he ascends, returning to the Godhead from whence he came. We seem to be looking at separate actions in the world, though they are related—Exodus remotely leads to the Ascension through its establishment of the relationship between God and Israel, and thus both lead to the outpouring of the Spirit.

So?

What is important, what has such power, is the *relationship* among them and what it says about the very nature of God. About what that means for us. What is ultimately real.

The essence of God, the very nature of God, is a continuing flow of love, pouring out from each Person. (Try not to think “individual” here: a *persona* in Greek was

the mask an actor wore: *Identity* as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not the same as *essence*, or you could say, God-ness.)

The essence of God, the very nature of God, is this continuous flow of love from each to each, from all to all. The essential nature of God is active, dynamic, continuous love. St. John said it much more directly: *God is love*.

Now if the Being that is ground of all being, the Reality that gives birth to all realities, is love—then Love is an essential and constituent base for all creation, for the entire Universe. And if we are made in the image of God, then *love is the core, the essence of our own being as well*.

This is huge. Think about it: what if everything you see around you—every creature, every plant and tree, *everything* is an expression of Divine love—how does that change the way we see our world? If our own deepest nature is love – how then do we live? If we want to be authentic, fully alive, true to ourselves—how can the way we live, talk and act reflect the Love which is at the core of our being.? When we look at other people, how can we learn to see not enemies, not threats, not “those people”, not labels or categories—but a person, beloved of God, who deserves to be treated with kindness and respect for the image of God that they are?

This is radical!

If every person who considers herself or himself a Christian lived and acted this way, the world would be a remarkably different place. If each of us made a point of treating all around us with kindness, with patience, with a gentleness that reflects the great tenderness of our God... The entire atmosphere of our culture would change. It's worth an experiment—for example, the next time you're in the check out line in Wegmans and the person ahead of you pulls out a thousand coupons, muddles through their purse or hassles the cashier— and she or he gives you that desperate, apologetic look—try saying, “I am in no hurry, take your time” and watch their shoulders visibly relax. You have just improved the world for that person. Dramatic gestures are nice, and sometimes important, but we can change the world just by the little everyday encounters that make up so much

of our lives. And we are becoming more fully what we already are—people made in and reflecting the very image of God. Authentic people. People who not only spread the Good News, but folks who *are* the Good News that our world so desperately needs. Because the Trinity, God, is love—and at our core, so are we.