

Title: The Trinity and the Events of the Week
Date: 6/12/2022 (Trinity Sunday, Year C)
Location: St. Alban's Episcopal Church
Service: 10am Holy Eucharist (Hybrid)
Readings: [Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31](#); [Romans 5:1-5](#); [John 16:12-15](#); [Canticle 13](#)
Video Link: <https://youtu.be/W1bnRDo66dU?t=1140>

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity.¹ Amen.

Last Sunday, we heard that the Holy Spirit came among the disciples in a most dramatic fashion. From heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where the disciples were staying.

Tongues of fires appeared
and divided among them
so that a tongue rested on each person (Acts 2:2-3).

All of a sudden, they were able to speak in the various languages native to the people who crowded around them.

This was a very real reminder
that even though Jesus has ascended into heaven, they are not alone.
This leaves no doubt
that the Holy Spirit...is in the house.

But actually, the Holy Spirit has always been here.

When Genesis 1:1 proclaims, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," God was actually not as alone as that may sound.

The gospel according to John tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being" (John 1:1,3).

In the Old Testament there are many references to the "Spirit of God"²,
and some theologians consider the figure of Wisdom
the Holy Spirit personified.³

In today's reading from Proverbs, Wisdom reminds us,
"The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.

Ages ago I was set up, at the first,
before the beginning of the earth."

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Source, the Word and Wisdom.

The God that creates, the God that redeems, and the God that sanctifies.

Such is the glory of the eternal Trinity.

Such is the Unity we worship.

This brings up questions like
“How does that EVEN work?” or
“What does this mean?”
It’s a mystery
wrapped in a puzzle
fried in an enigma.

Theologians have been arguing about this since the early days of the church. ****Spoiler alert**** to date **no one** has solved this holy mystery to everyone’s satisfaction. The word “trinity” never appears in scripture, yet it continues to play a big role in our conception and practice of faith. For example, in the Episcopal Church we don’t re-baptize a person baptized in another denominations UNLESS you come from a tradition that did not baptize with the trinitarian formula. If you were not baptized “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”, then we will baptize you again.

The more we talk about the Trinity,
the more it starts to feel like inside baseball.
This can easily become a conversation that is accessible to
and understood by
only a few.

When that happens, sometimes I begin to tune out.
So, let’s take a step back and ask, “Why does this matter?”

I had planned to start with a lighthearted story, but the events of this week have been weighing on me.

- A fourth grader who survived the shooting in her classroom testified via video at a congressional hearing,⁴ and she is not the only one who has been traumatized by the massacre in Uvalde.
- The mother of a survivor of the Buffalo shooting testified on the connection between racism and violence that resulted in that act of domestic terrorism and hate crime.⁵
- The House committee investigating the Jan 6 assault on the US Capitol held its first public hearing on Thursday.⁶
- The temperature has been close to or over 100 degrees, and folks have told me this is too early in the summer for it to get this hot.
- Gas prices are up, and no matter how we wish it were different, the pandemic is still a thing.
- This is not to mention the things folks are dealing with on a personal level.

All of this has been on my heart and in my mind as I’ve been contemplating the concept of the Trinity and the readings for this week.

So, why are we talking about the Trinity as all of this is going on? I hope you share with me your thoughts; here are three of mine.

First, talking about the Trinity
reminds us that it’s ok not to have all the answers right this second;

this keeps us from being subject to analysis paralysis.
We don't have to be an expert on the Trinity
before getting baptized and confirmed
or before we love one another as Jesus loved us.
Likewise, we don't need to be an expert on sociology or public policy
to see why America experiences more mass shootings
and has more gun deaths than any other country.

To be clear, I'm NOT saying we shouldn't be thoughtful.
Things are complicated,
and each of us respond to the events of this week
through the lens of our own histories.

AND I hope we can all agree
that we want to live in a world
where our children don't have to undergo active shooter drills,
and start from there.

Likewise, I hope we can all agree
that we want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus
and not only proclaim **but make real**
good news to the poor, release to the captive,
sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed (Lk 4:18),
and start from there.

Second, talking about the Trinity
reminds us that we are never truly alone.
It feels appropriate to celebrate our graduates on Trinity Sunday.
They are entering a new phase of life
just as the disciples did after Pentecost.
Though their parents and loved ones and their church
will no longer be present to them in the way they have been,
that doesn't mean they will not continue to be with them;
the graduates can still draw on the knowledge and experience and love
shared with them and will understand all that in new ways as they have new
experiences.

Likewise, God remains present with us
through all of creation and in all of God's creatures,
in ways seen and unseen.
Jesus remains present to us through the scripture and the sacraments and, we hope,
when we are with other Christians, fellow members in the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is SO present to us it is IN us.
As Jesus tells us in today's gospel,
the Holy Spirit will guide us into all the truth
and declare to us the things that are to come (Jn 16:13).
It helps us understand and interpret scripture
in light of new life events and world events,

new hurts and troubles,
even when we feel helpless and alone.

Third, talking about the Trinity
reminds us that God is fundamentally a relationship;
God is Three-in-One and One-in-Three.
This shows us it is possible to have unity without uniformity,
to be distinct but of the same being.⁷
We can be united
even as we undertake different activities.

Furthermore, that God is Three-in-One and One-in-Three
is a reminder to us to not to think in binaries,
to not see the boundaries around manmade constructs
as fixed and unchangeable.

When scribes and religious leaders
try to trap Jesus into picking between A and B,
Jesus answers with C.

Constructs we've inherited through our culture and religion
around gender and sexuality,
marriage and family,
law and order,
happiness and success

may have been a helpful framework
for understanding and navigating
and flourishing in the world at one point.
Maaaaybe.

At least for some people.

However, when these constructs lead to hate instead of love,
it's time to reconsider.

When they place limits on entire groups of people
instead of liberating them to be who God created them to be,
it's time to reconsider.

When they create a culture that influences individuals to take lives,
whether their own or the lives of others,
it's time to reconsider.

These are signs that we must revisit these frameworks
and understand the history behind them
so we can choose to walk a different path.

On this Trinity Sunday,
may we remember that we don't have to have all the answers
before we take the first step;
all we need is a vision of the Kingdom of Heaven.
May we take those first steps knowing that we never walk alone,

for the God that creates,
the God that redeems,
and the God that sanctifies
 is always in us,
 present with us,
 and interpreting the world to us.
May God, Three-in-One and One-in-Three,
 open up our eyes and ears and understanding
 so our words and actions
 embody the loving expansiveness of the Trinity.

Amen.

¹ Excerpt from [the Collect for Trinity Sunday](#)

² <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holy-spirit/10-roles-of-the-holy-spirit-in-the-old-testament.html>

³ Donley, D. M. (2010). [Pastoral Perspective on Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31](#). In D. L. Bartlett & B. B. Taylor (Eds.), *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year C* (Vol. 3, p. 26). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-updates/ualde-shooting-survivor-gun-violence-testimony-house-representatives/>

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/06/08/zeneta-everhart-buffalo-shooting-congress-testimony/>

⁶ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-live-jan-6-commission-hearings-day-1>

⁷ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*