

Feast of the Holy Trinity

Cycle C, 6.16.19

Proverbs 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

THE LIFE OF THE TRINITY— A LABOR OF LOVE

Getting up early in Lafayette is a blessing. I look out over the hills as the first rays of light break through the darkness. The emerging sunlight casts dancing shadows on the golden carpets of our valleys. The owl in the Garden of Learning is still hooting and the noisy blue jay is already at the feeder – vying with the woodpecker to get the breakfast of suet and seed in the backyard aviary.

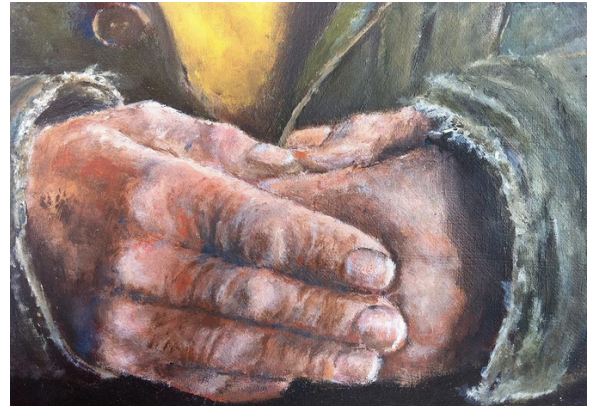


The roses and geraniums sway in the breeze, as the coffee brews and the computer warms up for whatever the day's writing task might be – usually a homily or a letter or a dozen email responses. Mornings like these are a far cry from mornings in my childhood -- sound asleep when my father woke up at some ungodly hour to get ready for work at the factory -- where he labored on an assembly line for nearly thirty years. I've often reflected on how lonely those mornings must have been for him – the only stirring creature in our house with five others still cradled between sheets and blankets.

I read a poem by Robert Hayden that seemed to capture that very

experience. It's called *Those Winter Sundays*:

*Sundays too my father got up early/
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,/*
then with cracked hands that ached/ from
labor in the weekday weather/ made
banked fires blaze./ No one ever thanked
him./ I'd wake and hear the cold splintering,
breaking./ When the rooms were warm,
he'd call,/ and slowly I would rise and
dress,/ fearing the chronic angers of that
house./ Speaking indifferently to him,/ who
had driven out the cold/ and polished my
good shoes as well./ What did I know, what
did I know/ of love's austere and lonely
offices?



"Love's austere and lonely offices" – sounds like a description of a lot of work that each of us does. Unnoticed, underappreciated, unrewarded, our work -- compensated or not -- must go on because, through it, we make our way in this world and find our meaning and purpose, whether anyone else realizes it or not. A "labor of love" we'll call it even though no one else in a million years would want to do it.

I wonder if God is ever lonely? Atheists deny his existence, believers are lukewarm and the largest Christian denomination, often said jokingly, are former Catholics. So many of even God's faithful followers view him "up there," far away from the affairs of us mortals.

We pray that we might one day see God face to face, but if anyone declares that they have done that now, here on earth, we deem them eccentric, “unbalanced,” or even crazy enough to be committed. I think we prefer to keep God at a distance. That way, God can’t interfere with our plans. My iCalendar will be filled with what I decide is going to be typed in, and I can delete whatever I want. No interference from above. Robert Browning echoes the poet’s take on this human-divine gap:

*The year’s at the spring,
And day’s at the morn;
Morning’s at seven;
The hill-side’s dew-pearled;
The lark’s on the wing;
The snail’s on the thorn;
God’s in His heaven—
All’s right with the world!*

I’d say that we know too well that all’s NOT right with the world – not in the Persian Gulf where two oil tankers were attacked near the Strait of Hormuz, causing U.S. sabers to rattle; not in India where the most intense heat waves in decades have claimed 36 lives since May as climate change intensifies worldwide;



not in Flint, Michigan, where this week all charges were dropped against current and former officials accused of neglecting their duties and allowing Flint residents, including thousands of children, to drink dangerous, lead-tainted water.

Our Feast of the Holy Trinity today offers us an antidote to this laissez faire approach to God and to the loneliness that accompanies each of our lives. It introduces us to a rich and rewarding image of a God who is never alone, a God who delights in connection and a God who assures us that we, too, are never alone. Our reading from the Book of Proverbs paints for us a charming and even entertaining picture of God in collaboration with this mysterious figure, Lady Wisdom, who is with God as an architect, a craftsperson, fashioning the world in all its intricacy and variety. Out of this divine play the world is created. The Spirit did not suddenly appear on Pentecost. The Spirit was present from the very beginning of creation.



John’s Gospel speaks of Jesus being present from the beginning of the world. *In the beginning was the WORD*. Paul writes about the “Cosmic Christ” --Jesus who is the Lord of all creation. That helps me to understand the presence of Christ from the beginning of time. So this communal God of ours, who is in relationship always and at all times, offers me great comfort and inspiration, because as human beings, our lives are relationship.

The very life of God – the Trinity – reflects the life that you and I try to live every day – connected with people, locally and globally. We fail miserably at times, but when we connect, it's awesome, and, at those moments, we, like God in God's very essence, are people in relationship, living the life of the Trinity as we do here at each Eucharist.

In writing to the community of Rome, St. Paul encourages us never to forget the power that is at work in us who believe. Even our afflictions can't bring us down because the love of God, which has been poured into our hearts through the grace of the Holy Spirit, is stronger than anything, even death, and brings us hope – a hope that will never disappoint. Last month marked the celebration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on more than sixty of our parish teens through the Sacrament of Confirmation. They received the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, and piety, and awe (fear of the Lord). These are powers that each of us, baptized into Christ and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, have at our beckon call to use each day as we face life's challenges. Those confirmed youth were also encouraged to show forth in their lives the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. These are the perceptible attributes of a transformed life – the qualities of Christian living that should mark the life of a follower of Jesus.



So make the Trinity the heart of your faith. Nurture that faith through personal prayer so the life of the Father, Son and Spirit will echo within your own life. Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to your advantage and manifest the Fruit of the Holy Spirit to make this world a better place. Be an effective witness to the gospel by testifying that Jesus is the Lord of your life and start with your own family and friends who need to hear Christ's message of love. And look at the world with a sense of wonder. God, who is both Father and Mother, is so much bigger than any definition we can devise or category we can conjure up.

At a Parish Retreat a few years ago the popular Jesuit preacher, Fr. Tom Allender, offered a memorable line that stuck with me:

If your God is in the heavens, he's as far away from you as you can imagine.

If your God dwells within you, he's as close to you as you are to yourself.

Find the love of our Triune God in your heart and you'll discover that our faith will still be demanding, love's "austere and lonely offices" will still be a challenge, but you will never be alone and your loving union with our Triune God will bring you a joy that no one and nothing else can.

John Kasper, OSFS