

Trinity Parish

22May

God as relationship

Some of you may remember the radio program *Doctor IQ, the Mental Banker*. Each show he would call on his assistants who were all over the theater to identify a contestant. They might reply, "I have a lady in the balcony, Dr." To her he would say, "It is time for that little monument to memory, the thought twister."

Then came the test, a little passage to repeat. "Willie is silly said Billy to Jilly, Willie is silly Jilly, to him said Billy". If she missed the thought twister she would be given two tickets to next week's production here at the Paramount Theater in Seattle and a box of Snickers. The thought twister. Do any of you remember it?

The doctrine of the Trinity which we commemorate today is not exactly from Doctor IQ, the Mental Banker. Even though it sometimes seems to be presented as such. Numbers are used, like three in one and one in three. Clover leaves are used to bring nature into the picture. It is all abstract. It seems that the doctrine of the Trinity is mathematical in nature. But it is not. I would like to move you away from that abstract perception to what I believe it is.

The doctrine of the Trinity is experience of the Christian community in our relationship with God. It is about relationships. Trinity is a metaphor, not a mathematical formula. There's no way to measure a metaphor. Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division do not apply. The doctrine of the Trinity is a metaphor. It is a metaphor leads to a truth. It leads to the truth of God, who as Tillich said is 'The

Ground of our Being"

I will use this Parish Church to illustrate what I mean.

This is Trinity Church. This is a parish community that has been here since 1865. I believe that the doctrine of the Trinity can be found just here as we lift up our experience and life as a parish.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the Trinitarian names that we give to God in this doctrine. Let's look at them one at a time in terms of the experience we have in parish relationships.

Father.

We are here today because we feel a sense of belonging to Trinity Parish. We have found a place in this community that affirms us as individuals who are at the same time a part of a community of people who come together in worship and ministry. In a deep sense belonging is creation. It is the Father. It is the identity that we find sharing with one another. We experience a sense of holiness in these relationships. As we grow they matter deeply. So we affirm this as coming from the Divine Creator. The Father.

Son

Jesus calls him Abba, Father. Jesus of Nazareth has called us in another sense. He comes to us out of the readings of the Scriptures, the singing of hymns and the preaching of the Word. Slowly over time our relationship to Jesus develops and deepens. We have a sense of his presence in our life which is Holy and taste of the Divine. We call Jesus in this way, the Son.

Many of us have had a direct experience with this Jesus in our lives that is particular and strongly present. Times of joy and

times of stress. In prayer and meditation. I can say that many times in my more than 50 years of pastoral experience I have found these experiences in conversation with others. It is far more frequent than I would have supposed.

This relationship to Jesus as a relationship to God, It is Holy, it is transforming and life-giving. So we add this experience to the Trinity. Jesus in our experience is The Son, the Holy presence of God in our lives.

### Spirit

The Holy Spirit of God is the Spirit that dwells in community. This community. Trinity Parish. Over these many many years the Spirit has supported and given direction to the life of this parish. In my time I have watched you recover from the Nisqually earthquake and refurbished the place of worship so that its dignity continues to enrich our lives. This was the work of the Spirit. This was the Spirit of God, calling, daring, demanding, encouraging, warning and supporting the work we were being called to do.

It is this Spirit of God, who in community, calls us to the work of ministry in the world in which we live. The Holy Spirit is the fire poured out upon us. As Emil Brunner said, "the Church exists by Mission as Fire by Burning". The fire is the Spirit of God relentlessly sending us forth to ministry.

Over the years this parish has responded to the Spirit in many ventures.

- You established as many as 14 other parishes, including St. Mark's where I served.
- In the 50's you were immersed with the children of Yessler Terrace in Sunday and after school programs.

- In the 60's you were significant in the Civil Rights movement with a hotline for reporting violations.
- In the recession of the 70's this parish developed Neighbors in Need which became NorthWest Harvest which now occupies the former gym on Cherry St.
- You have had a strong ministry to the hospitals which surround you.
- Your global concern was reflected in sending your Rector to the Sudan for mission of reconciliation and also bringing African clergy here.

All of this mission and more is the experience of the Spirit of God, whom we name The Holy Spirit in the Doctrine of the Trinity.

There is One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We make this confession of faith and trust out of life experience. Trinity Parish nobly incarnates the living of this doctrine of the One Holy and undivided Trinity.

AMEN  
Cabell