

Beyond Us and Within Us
May 30, 2021, Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
Gospel of Matthew 28:16-20
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By definition, God is beyond imagination and language. God can never be understood or captured adequately in any formula or theological dogma. And science continues to discover more and more about the physical universe. And the more answers there are, the more questions arise. The universe continues to be a great mystery....and with billions of galaxies, the universe continues to expand in all the directions it can wiz.

Our concept of God expands as well. Historically, humanity eventually learned the earth is not flat, that the sun does not revolve around the earth....and the moon is not made of cheese. Also there is no man in the moon.

But seriously we ask who created all this and what phenomenon holds it in existence? We see it as God who is infinite and who had no beginning and no end. It is mind blowing. Our minds are not equipped to grasp infinity and eternity.

When Jesus ascended into heaven we think of 'up there into the clouds'. As human beings, we need to put things into terms that human beings can understand. That often means projecting human qualities onto God so we can understand at least some aspect of God.

When we look at salvation history, first there was Israel's experience of coming to see that the maker of the universe is the one they called *Yahweh*, who rescued them from slavery in Egypt, and then again from exile in Babylon. They saw themselves as a people uniquely loved by the unimaginable **Creator of all**. The Moses of Deuteronomy says, "Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking from the midst of fire, as you did, and live?" Here, **God has a voice** and is depicted as father, mother, protector, and guide. We Christians along with our Jewish and Islamic brothers and sisters encounter a God who speaks. The universe and all creation is not some random runaway event. Our God is personally involved always.

In the New Testament, God became supremely revealed in **Jesus of Nazareth**. Here we come then to worship a God whose **Word** is expressed in human flesh. We discover even more deeply that God is a relational being, a *personal* reality.

From there, that divine self-revelation came to be recognized in Christian lives in the power of the **Holy Spirit** as depicted in Paul's letter to the Romans in our second reading. Each one of us is adopted into this *interpersonal reality of God* and we are called to share it with others. The universe's origin was not slavery or fear before impersonal forces of matter and history, but rather, an adopting parent "Abba".

The mystery of the Trinity gives us a tiny glimpse into the intimate life of God. The source of life is the Trinity but in the dispensation by which the Trinity restored our humanity, something new occurred. The Trinity no longer acted as one. All the world's religions, the Hebrew, the Moslems, the Buddhists, and so on, have their various ideas of a supreme being. But only Christianity has the Triune God.

The Ecumenical councils of the first four hundred years of the Church grappled with these questions. Just who was Jesus? Was He truly God as Father is God? And how does the Holy Spirit fit in? God is Trinity, a flow of relationships among persons. God in three persons but of one nature. If we see God as being Love itself, then we see the need for relationship between persons.

A strong point for us to consider as we reflect on the Trinity today, is to ponder the beauty of personhood and what that means for relationship. Our lives only have meaning in relationship with others. To recognize that the Spirit of God pervades throughout God's creation including within each one of us, means we are never alone.

God can be experienced, tasted, and related to in love and in friendship. When we live inside these relationships, God lives inside of us and we live inside God.

God at the dinner table is more important than the theology classroom.

God is community, family, parish, friendship, hospitality, and whoever abides in these abides in God and God abides in him or her.

God is community and only in opening our lives in gracious hospitality will we ever understand that.

The Trinitarian formula marks the beginning of every Eucharistic celebration as well as the formulary for baptism.

In spite of all the isolating aspects to the world we live in right now, particularly the isolating effects of Covid over this last year, we are still in relationship in and with God in the world if we remain open to His Spirit. We find ways to allow that Spirit to manifest in our lives the best way we can. To find that place within our hearts that is connected with all God's creation informs us we are not alone regardless of our physical circumstances. We may live alone in our bubble, we may be in a care home, we may be single, widowed, divorced, feeling alienated from society's norms, but we are not alone. We may sometimes ask where God is because we don't necessarily tangibly feel God's presence in our suffering and in our loneliness. We may feel that no one in the history of the world has had to deal with what I have had to deal with or nobody has sinned as badly as I have. Nonetheless our God knows intimately what we are going through and knows us through and through more than we can ever know ourselves.

If scientists cannot see what's on the other side of the universe, how can we begin to expect to see the other side of God? If we could, God would no longer be God. Leave room for God to be God, for there will always be mystery. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. He wants us to know this and as the Gospel today proclaims, Jesus assures his followers of His abiding presence until the reign of God is established in its fullness. Time and time again, believers have been called upon to wait on God to lead. When we jump the gun and get ahead of God, we basically take on the role of God ourselves and suffer unnecessarily. It is that assurance that He will be with us that gives us the strength and courage to wait on Him to guide us forward.

Jesus is the bridge between us and the Father. He says, "I am the way the Truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through Me." We pray to the Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.