

June 12, 2022  
Year C; Trinity Sunday  
Proverbs 8: 1-4,22-31  
Psalm 8  
John 16: 12-15

**Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31**

*Does not wisdom call,  
and does not understanding raise her voice?  
On the heights, beside the way,  
at the crossroads she takes her stand;  
beside the gates in front of the town,  
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:  
"To you, O people, I call,  
and my cry is to all that live.  
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.  
When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth--  
when he had not yet made earth and fields,  
or the world's first bits of soil.  
When he established the heavens, I was there,  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,  
when he assigned to the sea its limit,  
so that the waters might not transgress his command,  
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
then I was beside him, like a master worker;  
and I was daily his delight,  
rejoicing before him always,  
rejoicing in his inhabited world  
and delighting in the human race."*

**"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."**

**There are times when words are insufficient, when words fall short in our lives, times when, despite our best efforts, well, there are no words to describe what we feel, what we**

struggle with, what we can catch only a glimpse of understanding.

Welcome to Trinity Sunday.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> we began the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday, starting the over 3 months of our most holy time of the church year: Lent, Holy Week, Easter, the Day of Pentecost, and now concluding today with Trinity Sunday.

Next week we settle into the long quiet season of Pentecost, with no more high holy days until November 1<sup>st</sup> and All Saints Day.

From our start with the deeply tangible, earthy Ash Wednesday, with the ashes we could see and feel and carry on our foreheads, we have walked these most holy days of Lent and Easter and Pentecost, and we conclude today with the elusive Trinity.

The Trinity has confounded folks for centuries.

Where the ashes are literally on our fingers, on our foreheads, the Trinity is mystery, both seemingly simple and wildly incomprehensible, all at once.

Father Son and Holy Spirit.  
Creator Redeemer Sustainer.  
Three in One.  
Co-Equal.

As humans we like things made clear, we want the definitions, the facts, and God as understood in the Christian concept, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, can be explained but only glimpsed in understanding.

It is important to pause now and note that the word Trinity is not in the Bible. Of course, the words Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, appear numerous times, but the understanding, and hence the word “Trinity” and the doctrine, came much later. The doctrine was developed in the 4th century, the 300s. But this day to remember the doctrine of the Trinity, did not enter the church calendar until well into the Middle Ages, about the 1200s, only about 800 years ago.

With many years of pondering the Trinity, I have come to believe that the Trinity is mysterious intentionally, keeping us from doing our usual human weakness and sin of boxing up God, getting God so clear and defined that we think we can be in charge, that we can control God.

Our reading today from Proverbs, speaks of Wisdom and pushes us to think beyond our traditional view of God as masculine, offering a view of Wisdom as feminine, and as present with God from the beginning. Wisdom speaks of her creation as first and as

witness to all God created, echoing the creation story in Genesis as God creates the heavens, the waters and the earth and fields, “the first bits of soil” as the text brings us back to those earthly details. Some theologians interpret Wisdom as an understanding of the Holy Spirit, thus bringing the feminine into the Trinity.

And this upsets some folks, stretching our minds to at least ponder God as beyond what we picture, what we think we have always known, can feel like too much, understandably. But I do think part of the purpose of the Trinity is to push us.

Well, at this point my brain is weary with all these words! And as I prepared this sermon, I found myself looking to artists to help me, to get me off words and into images.

Our bulletin cover offers a classic image of the Trinity: the crown as Father, the cross as Jesus, the dove as Holy Spirit.

But the Trinity with its mystery, with its stubborn refusal to give into our begging for clarity, for boxing up and fully understanding our God, has appealed to artists for centuries.

So, I began looking through art to stop talking and perhaps see more clearly.

I have chosen just a few pieces of art from the numerous possibilities.

Our bulletin cover hints at the inclusion of the Celtic Trinity knot, showing the 3 of the Trinity, separate, but connected, equal, and whole.

This piece allows you to see the Celtic knot alone, better able to trace the lines.

Next, the ancient art of painting icons has included depictions of the Trinity, in three persons, symbols surrounding them.

More modern representations are plentiful, stepping out into other cultures and countries, here in Native American art.

And finally, a Catholic artist in India offers a totally different perspective in these three hands, using Indian symbols.

Painted by the Jesuit artist-priest Father A. J. Thamburaj, this painting called, *The Holy Trinity*, expresses a complex theological doctrine through mudras, Indian hand gestures, and color.

There are numerous layers of meaning in the symbols and colors of the hands, but I'll simply offer that the green is the Father, the blue the Son, and the red the Holy Spirit.

We have shared a tiny taste of the rich art of the Trinity, urging us out of our boxes and into contemplation of our mysterious and complex God, both as abstract as all time and space, and as close as the beating of our hearts, the whisper of our own breath.

So, I'll end back at words, reverberating off the simplicity of the Celtic knot. The earthy, accessible words of Celtic prayers reach me, drawing me closer to God. There is an informality and a welcome in Celtic prayer, including how these prayers refer to the Trinity, often as simply The Three, and at times the Holy Three, The Sacred Three.

This simplicity helps me to stop figuring out the Trinity and instead live into, and live with, and be welcomed by the Three.

This prayer offered for comfort in grief and in our daily lives, after a long day:

Let us pray:

*The Holy Three encircle you  
The Saving Three release you  
The Eternal Three keep you  
May the Loving Three caress you and work in you,  
In your loved one  
In those you have lost,  
In your dark,  
In your day,  
In your pain,  
In your seeing,  
In your journey,  
In eternity.  
Amen.*

*(The Circling Prayer from "Celtic Blessings: Prayers for Everyday Life" compiled by Ray Simpson 1999)*

