

In the name of the one holy and undivided Trinity

There is an inside joke among priests in the Episcopal Church that when it comes to Trinity Sunday: which today is, let your seminarian preach because...

the Trinity is complicated and can get kind of abstract and if you aren't careful you can get tied up in knots...So before we go any further let's ground ourselves in El Theologia Wikipedia

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity (Latin: Trinitas, lit. 'triad', from Latin: trinus 'threefold')^[1] is the central doctrine concerning the nature of God in most Christian churches. It defines one God existing in three coequal, coeternal, consubstantial divine persons:^{[2][3]} As the Fourth Lateran Council declared, it is the Father who begets, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.^{[5][6]}

Or in the more evocative words of the Benedictine mystic Bernard de Clairvaux: The Father gives the kiss, the Son receives it and the Holy Spirit *is the kiss itself*. Now, that's beautiful

You may have noticed however from the readings this week

that the Bible doesn't explicitly mention the Trinity a whole heck of a lot. It may or may not be implied but the lectionary writers had to do some fishing for explicit references to the Holy Trinity in scripture. They came up with : All the "let theres" in Genesis extolling the diversity of creation, a line in 2nd Corinthians, and 4 strong sentences from Mathew. The idea of the Trinity was developed slowly, over *centuries*. It didn't spring full born from the head of Jesus.

I have a funny story about someone, who shall remain nameless who once ordered 1000 pipe cleaners on a Tuesday...it was the only way to get them here from Amazon fast enough.... to try to make a model of the Trinity to share with her congregation on Sunday....(Demonstration of Borromean Rings here and then throw them up in the air :)) But who luckily thought better of it, when she remembered that what is most important about the Trinity wasn't illustrating some mathematical conundrum but celebrating the breadth and depth of our home in God and God's home in us...and the best place to experience this was right here at IN the Church of the Holy Trinity. So she threw away the pipe cleaners away (or gave them to Sunday school) and made a cake for coffee hour, instead!

And now here are three very real stories about finding our home in the mystery of God, right here in God's beloved house, in the width and depth and breadth of the Church of the Holy Trinity.

Story #1

175 years ago, a woman, Martha Mortimer Starr left her house and land to her church as a potential location for a new and bigger building that she sensed they were going to need. 25 years later, that building was consecrated...an event we will celebrate at our 150th birthday party next Easter! That's a big deal. 150 years.

In her will, however Martha insisted on one condition: the name of her church had to be changed from Christ Church to The Church of the Holy Trinity.

Why?

Was she a closet 19th century theologian, trying to say something profound about the multidimensional reality of God? I think it is possible. There were discussions afoot at this time within the church about the nature of God and she impresses me as one smart and feisty lady. It is also possible and maybe more likely given what we know about her life, that she was trying with a name change to assert her independence...*and God's independence* from the rector who had insisted she stay married to an abusive husband, a husband who was violent verbally and physically, who stole silver from her dead parents graves and then flooded those graves with water, a husband whom she eventually successfully divorced against the mores of the day and her rector's advice.

HOW? What gave her the courage? Did Martha know in her deepest being that God valued her safety? that God valued her identity? that God was capable of seeing her as a human being apart from her husband, even when her culture was not? Did Jesus tell her that she deserved goodness more than she was required to stay married and then she deserved love even if she had to give it to herself? Did the Holy Spirit carry her to the courthouse even when members of her own church turned against her?! We don't know. What we do know is that in her will, in spite of the controversy, she still was able to love her church enough to leave it land for a new building as long as they changed the name and we do know that she made a point to leave money to certain women in such a way that their husbands could not control it or ultimately control them. How remarkable! This is a creation story: one of the stories about how we as Holy Trinity came to be.

Story #2 is about relationship. On Feb 18 2022 I received a long articulate email from a stranger asking for some assistance. He was struggling to pay for his storage unit. He said that his precious collection of Vietnamese and Loatian artifacts was about to be dumped out onto the street and that in fact he might also be dumped on the street. This story seemed possible and far-fetched at the same time. It was detailed in a way I'd learned from experience fabricated stories sometimes are. And initially I wasn't predisposed to pay for someone's storage unit.

It took awhile to figure out as real relationships often do. But the story was true and more. Carl's help was absolutely instrumental and Maryellen's as well. But the stranger who wrote that letter is now a trusted friend. Greg Bosco, who probably made the coffee this morning and who in the past year and 4 months has organized and cataloged 2,100 books in our library and unearthed a vast array of treasures that *I wouldn't have known how to see* let alone organize, without him. In a sense his attention and care has loved our church history back into existence He taught me to see this church in a way I never would have without him: he revealed a richness, a depth, a height I never would have experienced. He loved each thing he found and worked to protect it and keep it safe and then photographed and created a digital archive of all of it, so we could all appreciate it safely forever.

He showed me among many many other things: records from Martha Starr's family; a paper receipt from 1785 for the 4 lbs 10 shillings paid in rent by one Sam Griffin (Griffin Hospital?) for the family pew and a letter from 1902, suggesting the church open a Billiard room.

"No one can gainsay That a billiard room and a reading room would attract and benefit many by bringing them under good influences, and removing them from the temptations of the street. In short, a church social club would prove most beneficial if properly conducted."

The unusual thing about all this is that just a few weeks before Steve Horst and I had been talking about the same thing!

Now, Greg prefers the library to the sanctuary but there is no question that he is an integral member of our beloved community.

Just yesterday he said: *I sometimes think I should start a non-religious religious group,*” and I chuckled, thinking Jesus might agree. His time with us may be coming to an end but Greg's story is a story about how unexpected relationships can enlarge who we are, they can be full of Jesus even if we don't both recognize that name.

And...only this morning I learned that Greg sent 18 letters to local religious leaders. No one responded to his first letter. One pastor contributed to his desperate Go Fund me campaign. We were the only community to set up a meeting. What a LOSS if we hadn't!

Here is a third story: about how the Holy Spirit moves in the world.

Yesterday for the first time ever the Episcopal Church in CT marched in a PRIDE parade as a whole church. This witness was initiated in part by us. Right here. And this would never have happened if individual members of our community hadn't spoken to me about the importance of having a rainbow symbol out front and if we hadn't brought it to the vestry for a vote and if the vestry hadn't passed it unanimously. Individual voices make a difference.

And here is the thing: The flag is important, NOT as progressive posturing but to let all LGBTQ and more folks know *not just* that they are welcome but that *they will be safe here: as safe as any other treasures we hold dear, as safe as our history in Greg's hands, as safe as our faith in the dream of God when all will be welcomed into the community of God. Safe. Seen. Recognized. Loved. Exactly as you are.*

We won't pretend to welcome you and then ask you to change. We won't pretend to love you and then throw you out when you want to run for vestry. And we won't ask you to put your God-given complex beautiful identity in danger by coming to church. And... *we will stand up for you against abuse.* Which is something we learned from Martha Starr, who heard it from the Holy Spirit.

It was an absolutely beautiful and holy day yesterday, walking with our bishop: 45 strong at least! Joshua lead the way in cassock swinging a thurifer and when a few people started chanting ugly and untrue things LGBTQ and more folks and therefore about about the God in whom we live and move and have our being, we encircled them and sang love songs about the God we know!

The God from Genesis who made the light and the darkness

And the evening and the midday and all the variations of light in between. About the God who made the water and the dry land

and the marshes and the beach and the mud and the rain and the whole beautiful spectrum inbetween. About the God who made man and woman and all the multivarious beautiful range of human expression in between and Gd called it all **good**.

These are the stories of breadth and depth of our home in God. These are Stories about the breadth and depth of the Trinity

These are stories about our home here in this Church of the Holy Trinity.

Glory be to the one holy and undivided Trinity, in whom we live and move and have our glorious, beautiful, multifarious being.

No pipe cleaners needed. But... there will be cake.

Amen