

Trinity Sunday – Year C – June 16, 2019

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 Romans 5:1-5 John 16:12-15 Psalm 8
the Rev. Deborah Kempson-Thompson

John Wesley wrote:

*Bring me a worm
that can comprehend a human being,
and then I will show you a human being
that can comprehend the Triune God.*

Wesley might be right on the mark

with his snarky analogy...or not.

Who can truly know the nature of a worm

any more than the mind of God?

Such understanding however, doesn't stifle

human curiosity.

It's how the creator designed us.

To the Israelites, the Almighty says

"I will be your God and you will be my people,"ⁱ

Well....as John Foley, SJ points out

that didn't quite work out.

Hence the incarnation—

God joined humankind as Jesus of Nazareth,

like human beings in every way

but willing to seek

and be guided by God Almighty in all things—

a willing recipient of the

transforming power of God.

For some during Jesus' lifetime,

that didn't work out so well either

God became man and walked among us

was good—

as long as it lasted...

*Thomas said. "We have no idea where
you are going, so how can we know the way?"ⁱⁱ*

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."ⁱⁱⁱ

So Jesus says to his disciples:

*I tell you the truth;
It really is to your advantage
that I go away:
for if I go not away,
the one who makes you strong
will not come into you;
but if I depart, I will send*

that Spirit to you.

Now humanity

might be getting somewhere—

Once they accepted the possibility of God's indwelling spirit!

Followers of the way of Jesus

during the first and

second centuries after

the death of Jesus.

began to more fully understand

and, in turn, explain their experience of God

to others as an intimate community

of one divine state

manifested in an intimate, inseparable

union of a three persons--

creator
freedom bearer
encourager.

Early Christians spoke of their experience with God

in this threefold manner

long before Trinity became common coin among Christians

and long, long before Trinity became doctrine.

The idea of a triune community was

expression from experience –

not dogmatic definition.

Just as we variously experience the weather or nature

or the friendship and love someone else,

in many different ways,

knowing all the while that

the person remains one entity.

Like the disciples and early believers,

St. Patrick in the fifth century, living as

as a lonely slave in a country alien to him,

discovered God to be flexible enough to

meet his every need.

Minding sheep in the green fields of pagan Ireland,

Patrick developed a deep communion with
the community that is God—

*boundless inventive energy
compassionate friendship
teacher*

God is One but Three like the shamrock,
he would later explain to the Irish.

One leaf, yet three.

One leaf, identical DNA—

Each with its essential part
to play in bringing life to the plant.

Another analogy from ancient wisdom tells us

A rope made of three strands is not quickly broken.^{iv}

When we cannot relate to one person of God—
we can rely on the other.

Parent doesn't resonate with you?

How about compassionate friend—perhaps a loving sibling—
Jesus?

Or

there is one who sticks closer than a brother^v

Spirit.

Brian Softgren relates an old Jewish tale to illustrate

God can be beyond our immediate

human understanding:^{vi}

All their lives the two young brothers had lived behind
a great city wall and never laid eyes on a meadow
or field.

But one day they decided to pay a visit to the country.
As they went walking along the road they saw a farmer
plowing his field.

They watched him and were puzzled.

*Why should someone take a lovely
smooth
piece of land covered with nice green grass
and dig it up?"*

Later they watched the farmer sowing grains
of wheat along the furrows.

*"That man must be crazy!" they exclaimed. "taking
good wheat and throwing it into the dirt."*

One brother exclaimed

"I don't like the country! Only crazy people live here. I'm going back to the city!"

His brother held his peace and remained in the country.
He watched the farmer gather the wheat
into his granary.
He saw him skillfully separate the grain from the chaff.
He was filled with wonder when
he found that the farmer had harvested
a hundred-fold of the seed that he had sowed.
Then he understood that there was logic in everything
that the farmer had done.

The moral of the story:
Mortals see only the beginning of any
of God's works.
Therefore we cannot understand the nature
and the end of creation.
The day may come when we understand the
Triune God
as fully as we understand
the life-cycle of wheat."

A trinity of God-given seed, sunlight, and rain
cause the harvest to be great.

John Foley, SJ emphasizes this idea:

*What aliveness,
what keenness there is in God:
speaking to us,
reaching out, flowing forth, and then receiving back.
God is like liquid motion,*

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*like a dynamism in which everything is changing always,
yet it remains always the same
because it is rooted in love—
because it is love.
We are invited into that circle of love.*

Amen

ⁱ Lv 26.12

ⁱⁱ Jn 14.5

ⁱⁱⁱ Jn 14.8

^{iv} Ec 4.12

^v Pr 18.24

^{vi} This comes from *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore: Stories, Traditions, Legends, Humor, Wisdom and Folk Songs of the Jewish People*, Edited by Nathan Ausubel, Copyright, 1948, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York.
<http://www.crossmarks.com/brian/john16x12.htm>