

TRINITY A

Matthew 28:16-20

Trinity Imprints

I have a question that is entirely reasonable to ask in church.

And the question is this:

Do you know the difference between heaven and hell?

Well, I recently heard that heaven is where the cooks are French,

the police are English, the mechanics are German,

the lovers are Italian, and everything is organized by the Swiss.

Hell, on the other hand is where the English are the cooks,

the Germans are the police, the French are the mechanics,

the Swiss are the lovers,

and everything is organized by the Italians!

I mention this because that's about the image we have

of today's feast of the Holy Trinity.

Everything is backward, out of order, and unintelligible: three-in-one,

nature and person, Father, Son, and Spirit.

What does it all mean and what does it really have to do with us?

Like our story, it is a heavenly feast with a hellish twist.

To answer that, I would like to share with you three quick stories,

and then we will see what they have in common
that sheds light on the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

The first story is this:

Once there was an elderly man,
and one evening he was taking his usual walk.

He was enjoying the crisp night air and the wind was blowing gently.

But suddenly he heard a voice crying out, ***“Help me!”***

The man looked around and saw no one
and so, he continued his walk.

Again, he heard a tiny voice, ***“Help me! Help me!”***

This time he looked down and he saw a small frog.

He gently lifted up the frog and looked at it intently.

The frog spoke, ***“I am really a very beautiful princess.***

***If you will kiss me, I will turn back into a princess
and I will hug you and kiss you and love you forever.”***

The man thought for a moment, placed the frog in his top pocket,
and continued walking.

The little frog looked up out of the pocket and asked,

“Why don’t you kiss me?”

The man responded. He said, ***“Frankly, at this stage of my life,
I would rather have a talking frog.”***

Then there is this passage from **Zorba the Greek**. Zorba is speaking.

He says, ***“One day when I was a child,
an old man took me on his knee
and placed his hand on my head
as though he were giving me a blessing.***

‘Alexis,’ he said, ‘I’m going to tell you a secret.

***You’re too small to understand now,
but you will understand when you are bigger.***

***Listen, little one. Neither the seven stories of Heaven
nor the seven stories of Earth are enough to contain God,
but a person’s heart can contain God.***

***So, be careful, Alexis – and my blessing be with you –
never to wound another person’s heart.’”***

A final story, a true one, comes from a priest friend of mine
who was summoned one day to the Diocesan Office
and asked by the Bishop

to become a Vicar to an inner-city parish.

The Bishop said that there were ***“some wonderful people there;***

yet they are old and the church and the parish

have been in decline for the past 20 years.

Just a handful of people left now,

so, they will not expect much ministry from you.

Just go there and visit and do what you can.”

His heart sank. This is not what he wanted to do

and he told the Vestry when he got there – three elderly women –

that he really wanted to work with young children and families.

He told them, ***“I really prayed to God whether I should come here.***

How can I have a fruitful ministry here?

But I cannot turn down the Bishop, I’ll give it a try.”

A few months later, he happened to be visiting the hospital

and stopped in to visit a mother with her newborn son.

She talked to him of the experience of childbirth.

“But worst of all,” said the young mother,

“Is that we had this baby all by ourselves.”

“What do you mean?” he asked. ***“Oh,”*** she said,

***“our parents are way across the other side of the country
and since this is our first baby, it is a little scary for us.***

We have no one to ask what to do next.

We have no grandparents.

***Most of the people in our neighborhood
are young couples like ourselves.***

I wish this baby had some grandparents.”

And suddenly, as you can guess, a light came on.

“Grandparents!” he thought,

“My God, the parish is full of grandparents!

The whole tiny congregation is nothing but grandparents.”

So, he talked the congregation into visiting the home of a couple
whose baby was born into the neighborhood.

Well, the baby visitors, as it soon turned out,
were great in evangelizing.

The young couple were looking for somebody in their neighborhood
to be excited about the birth of their children.

The church had a surplus of grandparents
and the two got together – and the church was reborn.

Where once there was solitude, there was now **community!**

So, there are my three stories.

What do these stories have in common?

What these stories have in common is their testimony
to every human being's greatest drive,
greatest urge, and greatest need: and that is
union, togetherness, even if it is with a frog.

To put it simply, to be whole, people need union!

To be whole, people need relationships.

To be whole, people need to have someone in their lives.

That is self-evident. Think for a moment.

Think of the most satisfying moments of your life.

Now think deeply.

Such moments, I guarantee you,

were when you sat on your mother's lap,

when you were held, when you were hugged,

when you were embraced, when you were loved,

when you were affirmed,

when you were simply in the silent presence

of someone who loved you, when you had someone in your life.

By the same token, think of the worst moments of your life:

when you were rejected, when you were divorced,

when you peered out the window watching couples'

hand in hand going out, while you sat alone.

When you were cut off from family and friends,

when you ached for a hug and it was not forthcoming,

when you were scared and wanted someone to hold you

and no one was there for you,

when you were betrayed by a friend,

and when you felt isolated.

We do not even like to go the movies or out to dinner by ourselves,

do we?

Why is solitary confinement such a horrible form of punishment?

You see what I am saying? You see what the bottom line is?

It is that we human beings are in desperate need of union –

even promiscuous sex, at bottom, is such a misguided search –

in such need for togetherness, for communion,

that our whole life is one large search for love.

Our hearts are made for one another and for God.

Rejection is such an intolerable hurt

because we need desperately to be connected.

But my question is why? Why this existential driving need for union?

Why do the young flock to malls and singles bars?

Why are those the best moments when union occurs,

and the worst, when it is absent? Why?

The answer, simply and profoundly, is in today's feast.

We are made in the image and likeness of God,

and God is communion. **That's it!**

God's image is writ large into our very natures,

imprinted on our neurons, coded on our brain cells,

and burned into our hearts.

The feast of the **Holy Trinity** says that God is communion,

is relationship, and therefore, so are we!

God's own inner self is to "**be with,**" to be in connection,

to be family: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

What makes God, God, is intimate relationship,
and no wonder we cannot help it,
if we must be the same way too.

We have no choice. That is why the apostle says
that we are most God-like when we are in love,
give love and receive love.

Every striving of our souls for union,
every reach out for companionship,
every urge for a hug and an embrace,
every act of love gives indirect testimony to the Trinity!

The Trinity says that God **is community** and so we seek.

The Trinity says that God **is relationship** and so we search.

The Trinity says that God **is love** and so we love.

We cannot help ourselves.

We are made to that image and likeness.

We mirror our origins.

We are who we are, because God, is who God is!

So, this is what we're celebrating today. In very simple terms,
this profound feast tells us why we are, what we are,

why we are, how we are and who we are,

and makes ever more real, those famous words of St. Augustine,

who knew a thing or two about love,

“You have made us for yourself, O God,

and our hearts are restless till they rest in you.”

Indeed, the Trinity is a mystery all right,

but it is a mystery about us too,

a mystery of love and our quest for it,

a mystery of the Triune Community

that we shall both recognize and enjoy in heaven.

Amen.