

**The Rev. T. Stewart Lucas  
St. Margaret's Church  
May 30, 2010  
Trinity Sunday, Year C**

*In the name of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.*

Today is Trinity Sunday. It is the only day in the church year when we gather in the church year to ponder a church teaching and not a teaching of Jesus. The Trinity is not a scriptural word. That this mystery of God is revealed to us in three ways is a core belief of Christianity.

The Holy Trinity is a confusing concept. Why does God need three names anyway? How does God live in three different forms and yet still is only one? How can any of us possibly describe the nature of God and God's love? "Robert Farrar Capon says that when human beings try to describe God we are like a bunch of oysters trying to describe a ballerina. We simply do not have the equipment to understand something so utterly beyond us, but that has never stopped us from trying."<sup>i</sup>

Yet how can we explain a mystery? If we explain a mystery, it is no longer mystery is it?

I'm glad that we are using the confession of sin again in this season after Easter because I have to confess to you this morning that 10 years ago in seminary I got a C on my paper on the Trinity. For that I was grateful, though I still blame it on my theology professor who is no longer a professor at that seminary. Anyway, perhaps instead of trying to explain this complex doctrine, maybe we should do what the doctrine first set out to do, give words to who we are as a people of faith.

As Christians commissioned to go out into the world and preach the gospel, we are called to be ready to witness to the power of God. A powerful God who created the world and all that is in it. A powerful God who loved us so much that God sent his son to die for our sins. A powerful God who is present with us in mysterious ways, gifting us for ministry.

"The early Christians, living in a hostile world, needed to put some definitive language to what they believed Christ had revealed to them. For the sake of unity they needed a common language, a common confession. In our hostile world, our witness demands the same thing"<sup>ii</sup> too.

The world still longs to hear the words we will give to our faith. How will we reveal Christ to our neighbors? We need some common language, a common mission, an understanding of what it is that connects us. How as Christians, do practice our faith together?

And so as Anglicans, when we are not able to explain our thoughts and faith through scripture, tradition or reason, we move to images and our own experience. Well this is where the image of the Trinity helps me.

The Trinity is often described as a perfectly choreographed dance between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three are separate dancers in a routine, yet they move as one through each of one of our experiences of birth, life, death, and resurrection. Each one of them has equal responsibilities, and each part of the routine has an equal degree of difficulty. If one of them were to fall out of the equation, the dance would not be the same. I believe that we are all part of the dance. When one of us does not participate, the dance is not the same, but when we gather together just as we are, broken, forgiven, and redeemed, we can have quite a ball.

This is how we practice our faith together with God and each other, "not so much that we will all march in lockstep but so that we will move like a dance troupe, in which one of us

contributes a somewhat different step to the unfolding work and beauty. Practicing our faith is like dance. Each event is unique and unrepeatable, but we are moving in patterns and steps of a tradition and a people. We are called to dance together, not just with those we meet in this life, but with a cloud of witnesses and a slew of saints from our past and future. We work at it, and practice for the gift, every now and then, of a loss of consciousness of our own clumsiness and the sense that we are soaring, doing what we are called to do.”<sup>iii</sup>

Our Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has been reflecting on our sense of connectedness this week in an article posted on *The Huffington Post* about the disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. After the announcement last night that BP’s most recent attempt to stop the leak had failed, I felt compelled to share her thoughts with you. Bishop Katharine writes that “The original peoples of the North American continent understand that we are all connected, and that harm to one part of the sacred circle of life harms the whole. Scientists . . . know the same reality, expressed in different terms. The Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) also charge human beings with care for the whole of creation, because it is God’s good gift to humanity. Another way of saying this is that we are all connected and there is no escape; our common future depends on how we care for the rest of the natural world, not just the square feet of soil we may call ‘our own.’”

She continues that “The still-unfolding disaster in the Gulf of Mexico is good evidence of the interconnectedness of the whole. It has its origins in this nation’s addiction to oil, uninhibited growth, and consumerism, as well as old-fashioned greed and what my tradition calls hubris and idolatry. Our collective sins are being visited on those who have had little or no part in them: birds, marine mammals, the tiny plants and animals . . . . Our sins are being visited on the fishers of southern Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, who seek to feed their families with the proceeds of what they catch each day.”

“Yet the reality is,” Bishop Katharine believes, “that this disaster just may show us as a nation how interconnected we really are. . . . There is no place to go ‘away’ from these consequences; . . . The effects at a distance may seem minor or tolerable, but the cumulative effect is not. We are all connected, . . . and we must wake up and put a stop to the kind of robber baron behavior we supposedly regulated out of existence a hundred years ago. Our lives, and the liveliness of the entire planet, depend on it.”<sup>iv</sup>

We have been clumsy in our dance together for sure. Last night I felt like we all had fallen to a great pile in the middle of the dance floor. But as always we must begin the dance again, perhaps this time with different music. Perhaps this time beginning with confession and moving once again to the table of resurrection and new life.

We are reminded of that dance of the Trinity each time we gather at the Eucharistic table to break bread together. We dance with each other as we share our grief and lay down our burdens at the foot of the altar. We dance with smiles on our faces as we share our joys and lift up our offerings. We dance with the Creator as we give thanks for our incredible universe. We dance with the Redeemer as we celebrate Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension. And we dance with the Sanctifier as we are empowered by the gifts of the Spirit for the work of ministry.

Russian artist Andrei Rublev depicts the Trinity in his fourteenth century icon that is reproduced on the front of your bulletin. The table or altar lies at the centre of the picture. It is at once the place of Abraham’s hospitality to the angels, and God’s place of hospitality to us. That ambiguity lies at the heart of communion, at the heart of worship. As soon as we open a sacred place for God to enter, it becomes God’s place. It is we who are welcomed, with or without the words to explain who we are as a people of faith.

Contained in the centre of the circle, is a sign of death. The lamb, sacrificed. The holy meal brought to the table. All points to this space, this mystery: within it, everything about God is summed up and expressed, his power, his glory, and above all his love. And it is expressed in such a way that we can reach it. For the space at this table is on our side. We are invited to join the group at the table and receive the gift of love for ourselves.

We are invited to complete the circle, to confess our sins and our faith, to join the dance, to complete the movements of God in the world by our own actions. Below the altar a rectangle marks the holy place where the relics of the martyrs were kept in a church. It lies before us. It invites us to come into the depth and intimacy of all that is represented here. So let's follow the Spirit up the hill of prayer. Let's live in the shadow of the Son of God, and rest beneath the tree of life. Let's journey to the home, prepared for us all.

The table is spread, the door is open. Come. Let's dance . . . in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Taylor, Barbara Brown. *Home by Another Way*. Cambridge: Cowley, 1999. p. 152-3.

<sup>ii</sup> Anderson, Mary W. "So Explain It To Me" <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=587>

<sup>iii</sup> Daniel, Lillian. *This Odd and Wondrous Calling*. Erdmans 2009. pg. 3.

<sup>iv</sup> The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori. "A Lesson from the Gulf Oil Spill: We Are All Connected" [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bishop-katharine-jefferts-schori/lessons-from-the-gulf-oil\\_b\\_591160.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bishop-katharine-jefferts-schori/lessons-from-the-gulf-oil_b_591160.html)