

Sunday June 15, 2025  
First Sunday after Pentecost  
Trinity Sunday

MEDITATION: "Three In One"

In the movie, *Nuns on the Run*, Robbie Coltrane and Eric Idle play two characters, Brian Hope and Charlie McManus, who steal a large sum of money from the mob. They are almost caught in the act, and their flight from the mob leads them to take refuge in a convent. They disguise themselves as nuns, but then the Mother Superior notices these two new nuns and puts one of them to work teaching the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to a class of students. Desperate to learn about the Trinity, the one character seeks out his partner in crime and demands:

**Brian Hope:** Explain the Trinity.

*Charlie McManus:* Hmmmm... well, it's a bit of a bother.....

You've got the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. But the three are one - like a shamrock, my old priest used to say. "Three leaves, but one leaf." Now, the father sent down the son, who was love, and then when he went away, he sent down the holy spirit, who came down in the form of a...

**Brian Hope:** You told me already - a ghost.

*Charlie McManus:* No, a dove.

**Brian Hope:** The dove was a ghost?

*Charlie McManus:* No, the ghost was a dove.

**Brian Hope:** Let me try and summarize this: God is his son. And his son is God. But his son moonlights as a holy ghost, a holy spirit, and a dove. And they all send each other, even though they're all one and the same thing.

*Charlie McManus:* You've got it. You really could be a nun!

But when Brian gets to the classroom, all that comes out of his mouth is that God is just like a shamrock. Small, green, and split three ways.

The gospel lesson for today is a challenging one. It is part of the farewell discourse. Jesus is addressing his disciples, telling them what will happen in the days and months and years and centuries and millenia that lie ahead. Jesus speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit, and does so in relation to himself and to God the Father. The disciples were full of questions, and so was I when I sat down to work on this week's message. Why this passage for

today? That's easy, today is the festival of the trinity, and this passage speaks of all three persons of the trinity. What does it mean? Why does our understanding of the trinity matter?

In his book Faith Seeking Understanding, Daniel Migliore says that "our knowledge of God and our knowledge of ourselves are always inextricably intertwined, the route that we take and the conclusions that we reach in the doctrine of God will profoundly influence everything else that we say about Christian faith and life."

So, what do we know about this God we call triune?

"God is not the supreme will-to-power over others, but the supreme will-to-community in which power and life are shared.... God is not absolute power, not infinite ego-centrism, not majestic solitariness. The power of the triune God is not coercive but creative, sacrificial, and empowering love, and the glory of the triune God consists not in dominating others, but in sharing life with others."

Years ago I read a novel by Daniel Quinn called Ishmael. Ishmael is a teacher. He is also a talking gorilla. Anyway.... In the effort to teach his student he talks about the power and responsibility that the gods have. If a hungry fox comes along and spots a quail, does the fox get a meal and the quail lose its life, or does the fox go hungry one more day and the quail gets to live one more day, but the grasshopper that the quail spots gets eaten? And then, the next day the quail loses its life and the fox gets a meal. The power and responsibility of being a god is deciding who gets to live and who must die on any given day.

Far too many people in our world act as though they are gods. They get to decide who lives and who dies. Today, Kiev is spared, but Kharkiv is bombed. Today the West Bank gets a reprieve, but Tehran is bombed. Today the National Guard and Marines are sent to hold the line against their own citizens - not just the few who are causing turmoil, but also against those who are peacefully protesting the actions of their own government. They act as though they have absolute power, infinite egos, and illusions of majesty. But they are not gods – and peaceful protest is the correct response.

In seminary they liked to throw around big words, like “Perichoresis” (the relationship between each ‘person’ of the trinity – Greek peri: about or around; choresis: the root of choreography – the movements or steps in a dance) I was asked about my concept of the trinity. I decided an atom was a good representation. An atom is a single thing, and it is comprised of a proton, and electron and a neutron, all of which dance around each other. So why is it important that there be three distinct aspects of something that is one? Why a trinity when it comes to God?

Only a God who created us could be so concerned about us, just as most parents are concerned for the well-being of their children. At creation, God looked on all that God had created and said that it was very good. God has a vested interest in creation.

But a God who is all powerful, infinite and eternal cannot understand what it is to be finite. Only a God who has become human can understand the heartache of losing a loved one, know the fear of a terminal medical diagnosis, understand the bondage of addiction, know depression and despair and what it feels like to face our own mortality.

I haven’t seen Jesus at TC Brewing lately or anywhere roaming the streets of Dorchester. How can a God who is out of this world, or absent help? Only a God who is imminent, who is as close as our breath can help support us, guide us, remind us of all that Jesus taught, and teach us new lessons as well.

The God we worship is all of these: all powerful, infinite and eternal: understands the frailties of human life; and is always with us. God created us to be in relationship with us. God came to us to restore us to the relationship that we turned our backs on. God remains with us, nurturing us into that relationship that we were created to be in.

Our response, as Christians, ought to be to restore and nurture relationships with those we share this life and this world with. To acknowledge the wrongs we have committed. To seek reconciliation. To seek a way forward together,

and not to turn a blind eye or a cold shoulder, or worse – and God knows we are capable of far worse. We hear about it in the news daily.

How we view God affects how we see our purpose in life. Is God an all powerful, egocentric, majesty? Or is God creative, sacrificial, empowering love who seeks nothing more than to be in right relationship with others? Which God we worship determines who we seek to emulate. For me, my image is of a God who is in a dance internally – the atom – who seeks to draw others – you and I – into the dance. Who is the God you worship?