

June 11, 2017

Trinity Sunday

Genesis 1:1-2:4; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20; Psalm 8 or Canticle 13

“Go...be Tov!”

In the name of God who creates life,

In the name of the Savior who loves life,

In the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.

Amen

Good morning! Those that know me, know that I'm a bit of a techno-geek. I love gadgets, new technology and tinkering with these things. At home, I have a personal weather station that runs off a small computer system called Raspberry Pi. The computer runs an operating system called Ubuntu, it is a platform that makes possible a system called IoT or the Internet of Things. This Internet of Things is a way in which we interact with objects such as weather stations, home appliances, and security systems wirelessly. It is essentially a wireless community connecting people and the technology they use. And it is no accident that the operating system which makes this Internet of Things possible is called Ubuntu.

Ubuntu is a word from the Bantu language, found in South Africa, and it simply means “humanity”; but it is also a philosophy of how people relate to one another. Archbishop Desmond Tutu summed up the philosophy of Ubuntu this way:

“A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole”

This concept of Ubuntu, of being part of the greater whole, is what came to me as I reflected on our feast day today, Trinity Sunday.

Now, please understand, I can guarantee you one thing about this homily I will not explain the mystery that is the Holy Trinity. It took St. Augustine nearly 30 years to write his treatise on the mystery of the Trinity and well...it's still a mystery. In more recent years Pope St. John Paul II said of the One and Triune God “If we could explain God adequately with our reason, that would mean that we should have captured and reduced God to the measure of our minds.” Suffice it to say that as we contemplate the Trinity we do so in awe and amazement at the three and equal aspects of God.

In each of these aspects though, we see reminders of our connectedness to one another, God's creation and to God. We also see reminders of the obstacles...the distractions...that can keep us from this sacred connection that God offers to each one of us.

True to my geekiness I'm a big fan of the Science Channel. I've always been fascinated by astronomy, space and space exploration; so programs that explore the beginning and end of the universe, far off planets and galaxies, and the riddles of the universe that still lack explanation capture not only my imagination, but my spirit as well. To think of our creator God that made, to borrow from one of our Eucharistic prayers, "the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth our island home" and then in the abundance of life God also created you and me. God created each one of us with such love and joy as though we were his first and only creation. However, too often people get hung up on the creation story either taking it quite literally or using it to demonstrate the problem with religion. Now I claim no great insight into the workings of heaven, but I feel confident in saying that upon arrival at the pearly gates we will not be asked by St. Peter "So, explain to me how the universe came into being?"

Instead, what we may find ourselves being asked about is "were you *Tov*?"

In the creation story we hear of the creation of sea and sky, land, sun and moon, and all the animals; and at the end of each day God said “it was good”. In Hebrew the word “good” is *Tov*. *Tov* has a meaning beyond simply “good”, Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky points out that it conveys the deeper sense that “what God created was prepared and suitable to fulfill the purpose for which it was created”. This is important; to be “*Tov*” means the creation has fulfilled its purpose. And then God creates humans, us, “in our image, according to our likeness”. But we may notice that God does not say “it was good” about our creation.

Wait a minute, the cows, birds, and everything else is “*Tov*”, but our creation in the image and likeness of God isn’t? Indirectly maybe – “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good”. Rabbi Karlinsky sheds some light on this too;

“Animals and other creations, fulfill their purpose by their very existence.” So, they are *Tov*. We on the other hand are “created in an incomplete...state...an undisciplined creature.” We must work at perfecting our self, at fulfilling our purpose and potential, until we develop to the level of *Tov*. But how so? Through the community of creation! Through fulfilling our potential to self, as uniquely human beings. Fulfilling our potential in relation to the Creator, understanding God’s will for us. And in our relation to our sisters and brothers, fulfilling our responsibilities to God’s people. It is in this Holy community that God created and we are part of that we reach “*Tov*”.

It is part of this Holy community that Jesus calls to the mountain in Galilee. We have walked with Jesus through His earthly ministry, in Jerusalem, at his arrest and trial, and in His resurrection. With the blessing of the Holy Spirit the Church was born. But today, it all depends on the Apostles making it to that mountaintop in Galilee. To put it in perspective; the Apostles, leaving Jerusalem after all that happened, would travel five days by foot to the region where it all started. And for some – Peter, Andrew, James and John, Matthew – they are returning home. How easy it would be to put all that happened behind and just return to easier times as a fisherman or tax collector. Imagine the conversations between them...with those that recognized them. Five days' journey to face a crucial crossroad – the mount of ascension and the mount of temptation. Do we continue this wild journey for God or just stop and go back to what is normal and familiar. Do we give up on “Tov”?

Jesus' command to meet him at the mountain top is offered us today just as it was to the Apostles. He calls us to nearness to him, to relationship with God through Christ in resisting the temptations that will be thrown at us from every side. Jesus knows the distractions we will face in reaching our fulfillment as creation of God and called by Christ, he faced them himself. It was on a mountain top that Jesus was tempted by Satan and resisted. We will fall short and get hung up on the mount of temptation, but Christ makes it possible to get past it. Think of the stumbles the Apostles made while Jesus was still with them! And despite it all, they are now called to take the kingdom of God to the world. We

are called to our mountaintop moment with Jesus too, to be with God. It will not be easy, but what wonderful assurance Jesus gives us “I am with you always, to the end of the age”.

It is through the Holy Spirit, the eternal breath of God, which is the essence of our very being and life, that links together all of God’s creation. **The Spirit is God’s trust in us** to fulfill our call in bringing God’s kingdom to the world; peace, harmony with the Creator and creation, love – the goodness the world so desperately needs. As we face situations that seem to go against the very nature of God – violence, terrorism, war, threats to the environment – or more likely hatred, dishonesty, envy, greed, pride - we must rely on God’s Spirit to move us in fulfilling our responsibilities to one another and the world. But, just as we face distractions and obstacles in our relationship with God the Creator and Christ our redeemer, we face no shortage of challenges in living a Spirit filled life.

A mentor of mine growing up, Father Frank King, once said “The hardest part about seeing God, is seeing God through a person.” The imprint of our Creator, the Holy Spirit, resides in each one of us...in all of God’s creatures. At times it is hard to see, maybe even impossible, but God is there. When we can see God through the person and in all we see from the mountaintop - the earth, the sea, the sky - we get a step closer to relationship with God and bringing the heart of God to a troubled world. We all want world

peace, but it starts with peace we bring to our little corner of creation.

Bishop William CR Sheriden offered in a Trinity Sunday homily that the Holy Trinity is not a definition or formula of God, but a summing up of the qualities of God. It is in the mystery of the Trinity that we find the elements and purpose of our creation.

When we understand ourselves to be a unique creation of God, **quite humbling considering the richness of creation**, we are on the path to understand that we have a purpose instilled in us from birth by our Creator. Through Jesus, our brother that walked with us and our Lord crucified, we are brought into an intimate relationship with God our redeemer. And God's Holy Spirit, the hallmark of our Maker, is what equips us to carry the love of God to our sisters and brothers and all of creation. The Trinity may not be a formula but it does much to help us reach "Tov"

From the same part of the world that gave us the concept of Ubuntu comes the saying "I am, because we are". My brothers and sisters in Christ, God has created us in and for community. God has lived in and redeemed our community of creation through Christ. The Holy Spirit links us all in one wonderful, mysterious, holy community. **God has given us purpose and potential to be "Tov"...go be "Tov"!**

Amen

References

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