

**TRINITY SUNDAY**  
**June 7, 2009 B**

*I would like to acknowledge St. Joan Chittister for her reflection on the difference between knowledge and wisdom, found in a sermon she gave entitled: "Wisdom: A Gift or a Task?" Likewise, I would like to acknowledge Barry J. Robinson for his story about "God's Fruit Stand" found in his sermon, "Lured into Life" (Sermon and Lectionary Resources).*

**Isaiah 6:1-8**  
**Romans 8:12-17**  
**John 3:1-17**

Trinity Sunday has always been one of the more difficult Sundays for preaching. I remember this being true for me early on in my life as a parish priest. I wish I had come across the following remark some thirty-five or more years ago. It comes from a recent edition of *Synthesis*, a weekly resource for preaching and worship. *"If I hear nothing else in a sermon today, I want to hear that it's perfectly fine if I don't understand this dogma and that it's okay to let it remain a mystery!"* It's a good starting point for me, because the emphasis has often been more on trying to explain a dogma of the church rather than finding the words, however inadequate, to speak of the awesome mystery of God's presence in our lives – and the invitation life offers us to live ever more deeply into that mystery. Perhaps it's because of my parochial school education where religion was always the lead-off batter of the academic schedule, the first few questions of the Baltimore Catechism I learned in Kindergarten continue to be the foundation of my own life and faith.

*Who made the world? God made the world. Why did God make you? God made me to know him, to love him and to serve him in this world; and to be happy with him forever in the next.*

It may sound simplistic, but it has opened since kindergarten a pathway to recognize and appreciate that God is mystery – a mystery not beyond us, but within us and all around us, an incomprehensible mystery which can never be exhausted.

The Holy Trinity is a communion of persons. It's about the love of a God who made the world, who created us, and who became like us in all things but sin in the second person of the Trinity, and who chooses to make a home within us through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

I know there are people who struggle with the existence of God in their lives, people who, in many instances, are faithful members of the church genuinely

seeking a concrete experience of God's presence – a presence which seems elusive. The ole three-leaf clover we've been told St. Patrick used in his day to speak of the Blessed Trinity just doesn't do much to speak to the mystery of God's love for many of us today.

I've personally never really struggled in my own life with whether or not I believe there is a God, but I have, however, struggled at various times with trusting God's belief in me.

I was a student of theology in Washington, DC during the early 1970's – and it was during those years that the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts was built. The opening performance in September of 1971 was composed by Leonard Bernstein. Entitled *Mass*, Bernstein chose to reflect upon the crisis of faith in our society using the Eucharist, or Mass, to address some basic human needs not always met by simply subscribing to a system of belief. In one of the scenes permanently imbedded in my memory, the congregation begins reciting the Nicene Creed, which we will recite at the end of my reflection. Through dance and song and movement, the ritual is interrupted when a chorus breaks in to say something like this: *"I believe in God, but does God believe in me? I'll believe in any god if any god there be. I believe in God, but then again, I believe in three. I'll believe in thirty gods, if thirty gods there be. But who? Who will believe in me?"*

God believes in us. It's one of the most profound insights I've discovered in my own life's journey. But it takes an awakening or spiritual rebirth of some sort or other, like the kind Jesus speaks of in his conversation with Nicodemus, to deeply embrace this spiritual truth with insight and conviction. God's grace makes this possible, but we need to be open to letting the mystery of God's creative energy touch us and transform us. God's light can touch the deepest darkness of our souls, but it takes a willingness on our part to risk new possibilities for God's life to be born anew within us. The wind certainly blows where it chooses and it isn't always easy to discern when the wind of the Spirit is blowing through us (or through our parish family) because it's a mystery – a mystery not beyond us, but within us and all around us. It's a mystery we are continually invited to live through our life with God in Christ, led by the Spirit.

There's a story told about a woman who went to the market to buy some fruit. She looked around and saw a sign that read, "God's Fruit Stand." "Thank goodness," she said, "it's about time. I can finally get some perfect fruit," she said to herself. She went inside and said, "I want perfect peaches, perfect blueberries and perfect strawberries." God, who was standing behind the counter, shrugged and said, "I'm sorry. I only have seeds."

We so often expect perfection in ourselves as well as from others because somehow many of us get a message early in life that we are created to be like

God who is perfect. At least that's been true of my own experience in childhood and in my young adult years. What we fail to grasp, however, is the message of the kingdom of God which Jesus came to proclaim both in word and in action – and it is to be open to letting the seeds of God's life grow within the mystery of our own lives. We're a work in progress. We're not finished products – and to say “we're only human” isn't an excuse for not taking responsibility for nurturing the seeds God has planted within us: seeds of love, seeds of trust, seeds of forgiveness, seeds of hope, seeds of peace, seeds of patience, seeds of courage and seeds of joy, to name but a few! It's not up to us to determine when we're ripe, like good fruit. It's up to God who created us – and who believes in us if only we trust ourselves enough to let ourselves be guided by the indwelling presence of the Spirit who leads us, through Christ, ever more deeply into this mystery called the Holy Trinity.

There was a popular slogan when I was a newly ordained priest working extensively with teenagers years ago which states: *Be patient. God isn't finished with me yet!* Well, it's more than a slogan. It's the truth. And whether we're young or old, we need to be reminded to be patient, for God isn't finished with us yet!

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is not about knowledge. It's about wisdom.

*“Holy One, what is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?”* the disciple asked. And the Holy One answered: *“When you have knowledge, you use a torch to show the way. When you are wise, you become the torch.”*

We are called to live with an openness to this mystery, confident of God's trust in us as we continually seek to know God, to love God and to serve God in this world.

We plant seeds which God alone will bring to fruition. And, if we continue to grow in God's love and trust in us, we may even become a torch, leading others by our example more deeply into this mystery of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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