

## The Divine Light in Everyone: Created in the Trinity

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It's finally here! Summer has arrived. The pools are open, the temperatures are up, the sun is shining; its summer! After the longest winter ever or at least it felt like it, we finally celebrate this week the beginning of the summer season. One of the things people love the most about summer is being outside in the sunlight. Whether you like the warmth or getting a tan, the sun makes the summer, but you don't have to get a tan to reflect the sun. You're reflecting it already!

God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, "Let there be light." That sun light you see is God's creation. God made the day and the night, God created the seas, plants, and animals. God saw how good it was. And when God created humans and saw everything God made, we read that it was supremely good. Do you realize that this includes you? We are created in the Triune God's own image. We teach that as a church. We hear that as faithful Christians, but do we really embrace this teaching that we are created in the image of the Triune God? And if we did, how would it change our lives and our world?

This is the fundamental question of the Franciscan friar and priest Richard Rohr's book titled *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*. This morning and the next two weeks, Pastor Steve and I will be preaching on themes from this book. The Trinity and our transformation is a great topic coming out of the celebration of Pentecost and last week was Trinity Sunday on the church calendar. Perfect timing, except for that little racing event that happened in Indy last Sunday, which is why we're continuing the series today! What Fr. Richard states quite well throughout the book is that God is relationship itself, even though we often define God as substance. As stated in the book, "When Jesus is revealed to us by calling himself the Son of the Father and yet one with the Father, he is giving clear primacy to relationship." [\[1\]](#)

We clearly see this in the nature of God we call the Trinity. And I know that we all have a clear understanding of this teaching, right? It has been explained in so many different ways. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, like how water can be liquid, ice, and steam. Saint Patrick used the clover. Still others use one rope with three cords. What do we do with this teaching and experience of God as Trinity? Especially since the word Trinity is never used in the New Testament. It wasn't until the third century that the theologian Tertullian used the word from the Latin *trinitas*, meaning "triad" or "threefold." Even though the word is not used in Scripture, we see Jesus addressing his God as Father and at the end of Matthew Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize in the "name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This description of a Triune God came not from a debate of professors of theology, but from everyday Christians trying to describe what they experienced in God, as love and relationship.

All throughout Scripture, we find the relational nature of our God. "The creation story itself in Genesis gives us a wonderful insight into God's character by using plural pronouns: 'Let us create in our image.' Of course, this is problematic for monotheistic Judaism and Christianity." Yet what this tells us is that the foundational quality of God's character is relationship and communion.

Again, God is relationship. We could really change Genesis 1 to read, "In the beginning was relationship." And what does God say about God's relationship with all of creation? It was supremely good!

It all begins with the divine dance of love between God in three persons or roles. The description of God as Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; speaks to the relational nature of our God and the relationship is one of love, which means that all of creation enjoys this relationship of love with the divine Creator, where God is not just Creator, but in creation itself. God is not just a being, but being itself. God is not just the dancer, but the dance of life itself. God is much more a dynamic verb than a static noun. God is a constant flow of love, as described by Fr. Richard and we learn this from the Trinitarian nature of God.

That's great, you might be thinking, you're giving us this grand description of the nature of God, but what does that really mean for us when we leave this place and go back into the race of life? One God, three persons or better yet, one God, three roles. Each of us plays different roles, don't we? When we arrive home from work at the end of the day and we see the kids playing, we will likely stop and give a hug and kiss. We're in the parent role or grandparent role. I can remember the first time I came home to my little boy standing, which was rare at the time, at the front door waving to daddy. Yes, you can be assured that my heart strings were tugged as I easily entered into the dad role that day! When we finally see our spouse and we give them a kiss to greet them, we're in the spousal role. When we sit down and call or email our parents or loved ones who live in a different city or state, we're in the familial role of son or daughter, brother or sister, or loved one. We act in three roles, yet remain one. What binds us to all of these people is the relationship of love we share between them.

This is Trinitarian theology at its best. It all begins with creation though; a creation that tells us it was "supremely good." You are supremely good. You are created in God's divine, perfect, and loving image. That's extraordinary, especially if it is lived out. Imagine a world where everyone felt loved and knew that they were created in God's image. I think the violence plaguing our world would lessen, relationships would change where trust, understanding, and grace would be the norm, not the exception because we would all live, work, and interact within the context of being loved and bringing love. You are loved, because God, the divine is in you. That means that anything good, any good gifts, Christ like desire, or Godly hope is from the God dwelling within you, which means it's not about us looking down on someone else or feeling superior, instead it's about seeing the divine image in me and you.

When you begin to see yourself and everyone else like this, it changes everything. When you know that you are created in the image of God and so is everyone else, it has the potential to change the world and would completely change our church community. This will be our topic for next Sunday. For now, I want you to hold onto this truth that you are loved beyond measure by our God who created you and continues to create you. We see this in the creation poetry of Genesis. We see this in the person of Jesus that God came to be what God loves, like all of us humans. We know that the divine spark, the divine image was already in all of humanity, yet God came in fullness to share our humanity in Jesus.

What would it look like to embrace a Trinitarian understanding of God? As Fr. Richard writes, "It would start by recognizing that each person is created by God as unique and irreplaceable – one to whom God has transferred and communicated God's divine image in relationship, who can, in turn, communicate and reflect that image to other created beings."

When you embrace a Trinitarian faith, which means that you experience God in the divine dance of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with the emphasis placed on the relationship and love between the three, you begin to experience your own life image differently.

You can see in yourself a piece of the divine. And you begin to see that in everyone else too. As Fr. Richard wrote, "You are created inside of the substantial and infinite love of the Trinity. You cannot get to such a place; you can only rest and rejoice in such place."<sup>[2]</sup> Our God, the blessed Trinity, began creation by giving light. "Let there be light!" Light is not really what you see; it is that by which you see everything.<sup>[3]</sup> The more light and goodness you see, the more Trinitarian you are. When you can see as Jesus did, you see divine light in everyone, especially in yourself and in others.<sup>[4]</sup>

The most famous monk in American history lived at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. Thomas Merton is one of the most important spiritual and theological writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. I was inspired to share a piece of his story this morning since I talked John and Peggy Marshall into visiting the Abbey during their Kentucky vacation last week. I also asked them to bring me back some chocolate bourbon fudge made by the monks, and they thought it was all just prayer and silence. It's also amazing fudge! Merton wrote about his awakening experience that happened of all places in the middle of downtown Louisville, KY in the shopping district, where there's a historical marker today and is the only historical marker given for a spiritual experience like this. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1958, the Trappist monk was running errands in the city and while standing on that street corner, he had an epiphany, a conversion, an awakening of sorts. Merton wrote:

*"In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers...I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. Now I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun."*

I have a framed print of these words in my office. I think they are good words for a pastor to remember. It is my vocation and yours, to recognize that we are all loved, that we are to love as God loves, and we are to see ourselves as beloved children of God created in God's own image and likeness. Wouldn't our world be different if we looked at others and ourselves in that way? It changes everything. You begin to have respect and appreciation for your life and the lives of others. You begin to see yourself and others differently, as children of God and you live, work, and interact in the context of being loved and bringing love.

Thomas Merton, as he wrote about his experience in Louisville said, "There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun." I suppose that's what I have been

trying to tell you this whole time. Just as you can't get away from the reflection of the sun in the summer, you can't get away from the image of God that dwells within you. You are made in God's own image and God said you are supremely good. Can't you tell? You are all shining like the sun!

Let us pray:

*In the beginning, you created all things O God, and say that they were good. At our beginning, you created each us, O God, unique and irreplaceable, loved and wanted, known and treasured. In all of our new beginnings, you create something new, so we will seek you, O God, in the freshness of this morning and in the beginning of this week, in the laughter of friends and family, in the colors of creation, and in this beautiful place. Lord God, author of creation, open our eyes to see your presence, open our souls to sense your presence, and open our hearts to love your presence, your presence found within each of us and in all others. Let there be light and may we shine like your son. We offer this prayer to you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

[1] Richard Rohr's The Divine Dance, Pages 44-45.

[2] Rohr, Pg. 79.

[3] Rohr, Pg 96-97.

[4] Rohr, Pg. 65