

"It's All About Relationships: Trinity and the Flow of Love"

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What a wonderful June Fest celebration we had last Sunday! We had some wonderful music during worship from the Gospel quartet Witness with our very own Sam Hinkle. I think Sam thought we changed the name of the group to Sam Hinkle and Witness implying that we witness to the talent of Sam, but I think we witnessed some great talent from the whole group and from the Indianapolis Municipal Band with our own John Marshall. The food was great, the music was wonderful, but was even better than all of that was to see the fellowship, conversation, sharing, and laughing going on among our church family. That's why we have June Fest! It was kind of a family reunion last week. We, as the church, we are family, brothers and sisters in Christ, and families are formed by relationship and love.

I shared these two characteristics last week as I described the nature of God we call the Trinity, as I began a sermon series on the Trinity and our transformation based on themes from the Franciscan Father Richard Rohr's book *The Divine Dance*. He wrote, "When we begin to see God and experience God as Triune, and it's all about this relationship of love, then there's a place at God's table for everyone," [\[ii\]](#). God has been calling people together since the beginning. In fact, as I shared last week, when we experience God as Trinity, we see above anything else a relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a relationship of love. That relationship is then shared between the Creator and creation and is bound together in love. And when our experience of God is communal in nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and when our experience with God is one of relationship and love, then guess what, we are called into relationship with each other. We are called into community.

It all begins with the gift of baptism. Did you hear the opening words of the baptism liturgy? "Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy church. We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through the water and the Spirit. All this is God's gift, offered to us without price." This is the teaching of the church and we baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew. It's biblical to baptize in the name of the Trinity and it's biblical to live out one's faith in Trinitarian community. We baptize our littlest ones because we know that God's grace is poured out abundantly through all of life and for the life of a baby baptized in the church, they are brought up in a community, a family that teaches them and helps them to awaken to the gift of grace given to them in Christ. We are baptized into this flow of relational love calling us to be in relationship with each other. That's where the Gospel hits the ground!

Fr. Richard challenges us in his writings to consider how we view God. "Instead of the small god we seem stuck with in our current (and dying) paradigm, usually preoccupied with exclusion, the Trinitarian Revolution reveals God as with us in all of life instead of standing on the sidelines, always critiquing which things belong and which things don't. Human strength is defined in asserting boundaries. God, it seems, is in the business of dissolving boundaries. We confuse unity with uniformity." [\[iii\]](#) That's hard isn't it? I spoke to this concept last week where God created us in God's loving image along with everyone else. Yet, we are often drawn to create boundaries rather than dissolve them. It's the easier space to find ourselves in, but it's not a place of growth.

It can be easy to draw lines in the sand, but “Jesus, on the other hand, demonstrates God’s grace toward and inclusion of people of all backgrounds -something his disciples and the crowds didn’t expect.” [\[iii\]](#)

It’s hard to be diverse and yet one. Yet we see this in the Trinity. Father, Son, and Spirit, diverse yet one, and maybe the challenge of this teaching is to recognize that we are all connected, united, and loved. Maybe our goal as a church, whether it’s Meridian Street or the United Methodist Church, should be unity in diversity. We’re not all the same, but we can be united in our diversity. We can move to a place where it’s no longer they, but we. We’re one church family as the people of Meridian Street Church. We’re one church body as the people of the United Methodist Church. You can keep going with that, we’re one body of Christ as people of Christ, called Christians. We’re one human family sharing this planet and its resources, and hopefully our relationship and love.

Many of you are familiar with the Lutheran pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber. She founded a church in Denver called “House for All Sinners and Saints”, where they pride themselves on welcoming those who have not felt welcome in traditional church settings. She talked about her experience of welcoming everyone into her church during an interview on NPR. One of the values of their community is welcoming the stranger, but as their church and pastor become more well-known not only in Denver, but around the nation, they had all kinds of people show up. You know, normal people, as Nadia called them, people who wore khakis and dress clothes, which was different from their community of those who felt like that had been pushed out of church. Nadia said, “Our weirdness is being diluted. A friend told me, ‘Sometimes the stranger looks like your mom and dad.’ That’s what is challenging to me about Christianity, being forced to look at your own stuff and being pushed into a space of grace that’s really, really uncomfortable.” [\[iv\]](#)

It’s hard to welcome everyone, it’s even harder to love them, but that’s the great gift and challenge of the church community, of grace, and of living a Trinitarian faith. I pray that we will learn how to be diverse, yet one; united in our love of God and love of neighbor, recognizing that even Jesus’ own community of followers, the first disciples, didn’t have it all figured out. At the very end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus appears to the disciples one final time after the resurrection. Even then, some worshipped and some doubted. Sounds like church. They are given a mission to live by and a mission that united them, “Go and make disciples of all nations, of all people.” Sounds like church. Baptize others in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, reminding them it’s about the community of God and God’s nature of relationship and love. Teach them to live out the faith following Jesus’ commandments or teachings. Again, sounds an awful lot like church. Finally Jesus tells them, the community of disciples, “I am with you always.” He was speaking not to them as individuals, but as a community, a church. Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is always with his church.

Fr. Richard reminds the church that “without the free flow of the Holy Spirit, religion becomes a tribal sorting system, spending much time trying to define who’s in and who’s out- who’s right and who’s wrong. And surprise, we’re always on the side of right! Your job is simply to exemplify heaven now. God will take it from there. Let love happen.” I love that and I need to remember that. It’s way too easy to put people into categories or labels and it’s very true for the church. Yet, when we embrace a Trinitarian faith, we find a God who releases our claims or needs on

boundaries. We find a God who reminds us that we are all united to God and to one another. Some of us know that, while others deny and doubt this reality. Maybe Fr. Richard is right, "the essence of the spiritual journey for all of us is to accept that we're all accepted and to go and live likewise." It's no longer us and them or they, but it's we.

We, as a church community, have an opportunity to show the rest of the world what it means to live together in the midst of disagreements or divisions. It's where we move to a space of grace, where we exemplify heaven now and let love happen. It's the place that growth can happen and we need to be in relationship to grow. That's not easy, we're all different, but it's the Gospel. It reminds us that we're not all the same, there is diversity, yet in that diversity we can be one. One God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One church; many personalities, opinions and people.

When we experience God in this way, we will begin to experience a church that welcomes and loves all people. Jesus didn't say, "Tolerate your neighbor," but he did say, "Love your neighbor." We don't have to define who's in and who's out or who we are to welcome or not, God already decided and we are all made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. All are welcome. We are made for love. We are made for community.

May it be so. Amen.

[i] Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*. Pg. 28.

[ii] Rohr, Pg. 36-37, 61.

[iii] Rohr, Pg. 88-89.

[iv] <https://www.npr.org/2015/09/17/441139500/lutheran-minister-preaches-a-gospel-of-love-to-junkies-drag-queens-and-outsiders>