

Trinity Sunday - C

It seems to me that, while I was growing up, the celebration of Trinity Sunday was an invitation to mind-numbing mental gymnastics as much as anything.

Every priest I remember felt to need to try his hand and explaining what it was we were celebrating.

But today's opening prayer simplifies the point of the celebration. That prayer praises God the Father as the one who so wanted to be known that Jesus became human.

It recognizes God who so desires that we share divine life that the Spirit continues to lure us into union with one another and with God.

In most basic terms, this is the feast of God's love, God's whole, eternal and varied outreach to all of humanity.

Christians are unique among the major religions of the world in calling upon God specifically as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We share some key elements of faith with our brothers and sisters of the Jewish and Muslim faiths: that God is one, for example, and that God is involved in history.

But when we Christians speak of the three persons in God, we profess in a way that neither Jews nor Muslims do, that God's very being is communal:

love is given, received, and brought to its fullest realization before God even begins the work of creation.

But the mystery of the Trinity also speaks of God's outreach to humanity—from Creation to the Incarnation and the Spirit's ongoing presence among us.

A little humility goes a long way when celebrating today's feast. There are so many images used in the Scriptures to refer to God, that that should be a tip-off that the truth about God cannot be summed up or defined.

The Muslims use their prayer beads to contemplate the 99 beautiful names of God. 99 because that's a good symbol of the incompleteness of our knowledge about God.

The Jewish people do not pronounce God's name out of awe-filled reverence, realizing that humans are ultimately incapable of speaking about God adequately.

We Christians have also been reminded by great theologians such as St. Thomas that everything we say about God leaves more unsaid than it says.

So, we make it a central element of our faith that we seek the truth of God rather than think we have found it.

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Today's readings offer us a variety of images of God's reaching out to us and his involvement in human history.

Proverbs speaks of God's utter delight in creation, including the playfulness of the whole process.

Creation unfolds under the influence of love. God is both the mighty architect of sea and sky and the artisan concerned with such finishing touches as individual eyelashes and fresh-smelling dew drops.

For Paul, Jesus reveals God's basic attitude of love toward humanity and invites us to fully enjoy the grace that springs from God's love.

Paul says that we are justified by faith. That means that God is always poised to make peace with us; all we need to do is to accept God's loving embrace.

Jesus' word-picture of the father embracing his prodigal son is a true representation of how God really is.

Today's Gospel makes a point that we need to take to heart even today.

As Jesus shares the Last Supper with his disciples, he says, "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you."

That proclamation offers us two very comforting and compelling ideas:

Jesus is telling us that it's OK that our concepts are inadequate, that we don't know the answers and that we can't understand all God is doing or asking of us.

At the same time, Jesus is saying that our limitations can be overcome and that the Holy Spirit will guide us to the extent that we allow ourselves to be led.

The feast of the Holy Trinity is not really an occasion to strain our brains thinking about the Holy Trinity, but it is a time to accept the invitation to loving appreciation.

It is a time to give thanks to the God who loves us, to meditate on the ways we have encountered that love and all the names for God that love has inspired.

Young or old, brilliant or simple, all of us are capable of celebrating this day as the feast of the great love of God.