

The Father, Son and Holy Who?

I feel like you are in ways joining me on my spiritual journey. The production of a sermon takes research and that means that I have a learning curve that will be never ending. I doubt that even the most informed scholars (which I am hundreds of years from) feel that they know or understand everything about the bible. Even if they know every verse, there is the subtleties that come with having slightly different interpretations of events and then there is also the parables that Christ used as a teaching instrument, again there are subtleties in the “answers” he provided. Christ was a great teacher that way. He didn’t always tell people what to think, he gave them the tools to discover a lot of that on their own and I believe he wanted people to think and revisit what he said. A good teacher answers questions with questions. This allows you to find a path to understanding which can take a great deal more time than telling you what to think but, in the end, it provides more support for your beliefs because you came to the conclusion on your own.

So, we have arrived at Trinity Sunday. So, where does the bible come up with the word Trinity? Surprisingly, it really doesn’t. For once, this isn’t a word that we learn through the bible instead, the bible teaches us about the three, the three in one; yet it never uses the term “Trinity”. Let us reflect on what is said in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians in 13:14 - ¹⁴May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Nope, no Trinity as a word, but the picture is drawn. Then in the Great Commission we hear the description without the word Trinity, in reading from Matthew 28:18-20 - ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” So, clearly the Triune is mapped out in our heads much like in Christ’s other teachings – letting us draw the conclusion on our own.

Last week was Pentecost. That ended the Easter Season. This is the first Sunday of Ordinary Time and we will be in that time all the way until Advent. What we are supposed to be doing during this ordinary time, is sometimes overlooked as a process. What is OUR journey supposed to be? Well, this is the time that we try and do as Christ commissioned us to do, we are to be disciples. I'm positive that I am not very good at this. Because of my ongoing education, people do however ask me questions. Trying to answer those questions is when I feel that I am possibly the closest to being a disciple. The old adage is still true, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. So, helping answer questions is my best effort at being a disciple but it is also my best chance at expanding my own knowledge and understanding of Christianity.

Trinity Sunday is about the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It was a question from a friend many years ago that opened a learning channel for me. To quote her: "If I am praying to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, **who is the Holy Ghost?**" that I struggled to answer quickly. The question when she asked it was almost meant to be a challenge, I'm sure of it. She further said, "we know who the Father is and as Christians, we definitely know who Christ is, but who or what is the Holy Ghost"? First, let me clarify that in my understanding of the research I have done, the Holy Ghost is better known as the Holy Spirit in our time. It is more in line with most of our thinking. Using the term Ghost conjures up all sorts of thoughts and is not always thought about in a positive way. Think of the movie Ghost Busters. Spirit is so much closer to what it is we are discussing when we look to the Trinity.

So, we have the Trinity, we have hopefully a pretty good idea of who the Father is and hopefully even a better understanding of who The Son is. Where is God in all this? Is the Father also God? Well, yes and no. The Father is part of what makes up God. The Son is part of what makes up God and the Holy Spirit is the other part of what makes up God. God is the combination of all three of these and falls in the center of the Trinity. So, there I am again, talking about the Holy Spirit. Who or what is the holy spirit? Your best example would be last week as we talked about the flames and the room and speaking in tongues. I think it is very important to understand that

it was the Holy Spirit that descended on the 120. The Holy Spirit is what they experienced. So, it is the Holy Spirit that descended on them through fire. It is also important to understand that not everyone will be given the GIFT of being able to speak in tongues, that gift that day came through the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire. God gives us all different Spiritual gifts. Speaking in tongues is a rarity. In reviewing my personal Spiritual Gifts, I scored highest in discernment and secondly in wisdom. That may not always be the case, because we change and our interactions with God change over time. I have always hoped that somehow, I would gain more wisdom. I usually feel pretty far from it. From Wikipedia (which sometimes does a wonderful job of summarizing things) These abilities, often termed "charismatic gifts", which are the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, increased faith, the gifts of healing, the gift of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, diverse kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues. To these are added the gifts of apostles, prophets, teachers, helps (connected to service of the poor and sick) (think Mother Theresa), and governments (or better defined as leadership ability) which are connected with certain offices in the Church. **These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to individuals**, but their purpose is to build up the entire Church.[1] They are described in the New Testament, primarily in 1 Corinthians 12,[6] Romans 12,[7] and Ephesians 4.[8] 1 Peter 4[9] also touches on the spiritual gifts.[2] The Holy Spirit, that is the way in which God can communicate with us.

If you yourself have ever experienced or know someone who has been reborn, they were visited by the Holy Spirit. A friend came to me immediately after experiencing a visit by the Holy Spirit. She was sitting in church and praying when all of a sudden, she had an indescribable (very joyful) feeling come over her. She could feel the Spirit and knew then that she was truly a Child of God. So, the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. It is also called The Advocate. In John 14:26 - ²⁶Christ explains: But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you. In Genesis 1, it is the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters.

Many times, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by a white dove. If you recall, the baptism of Christ, a white dove descended and the voice of God spoke. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is tongues of fire (as in last week). The point is that yes, there is a Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit and you do know what it is. It is the essence, the communication with God.

Now that we have established who the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is, how do **we** receive the Holy Spirit? That part may be easier. You can start with asking for forgiveness for your sins. You can't feel the Holy Spirit if your sins are separating you from God. That isn't always an easy first step. To many of us, admitting our sins feels a lot like admitting our failures. Then move to asking through prayer for the Holy Spirit to come to you. This is not necessarily something that happens immediately. It takes time and remember, in God's time (not our impatient earth time). Enjoy the fruits of the Holy Spirit which include love, patience, joy, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and at this difficult time, peace. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit guide your understanding of God. Again, as the Advocate, let the Holy Spirit speak to God for you and as mentioned before do not feel bad if you can't speak in tongues. In 1 Corinthians 12:29-31, Paul writes: ²⁹"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹Now eagerly desire the greater gifts." God intends for us all to have different gifts! As we try and focus on finding the Advocate and Communicator, it is difficult to remember that we are also asked to spread The Word.

I am grateful to someone asking me "Who is the Holy Ghost" because it caused me to do more research and understand that Holy Spirit better. We call to the Holy Spirit and the Advocate listens. I feel better in understanding this connection. So, as we enter "ordinary time", may we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and "listen" for the response so that we can follow the Great Commission Christ gave us.....and enjoy your spiritual journey....