

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
Romans 5:1-5
Psalm 8
John 16:12-15

The Rev. Dr. Anita Schell-Lambert
Trinity Sunday Year C
Sunday, May 30, 2010
Emmanuel Church, Newport, RI

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, *
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
What is man that you should be mindful of him? *
the son of man that you should seek him out?
You have made him but little lower than the angels; *
you adorn him with glory and honor;
You give him mastery over the works of your hands; *
you put all things under his feet: (Psalm 8)

I want to challenge some of the way we have understood our relationship to the universe – and to do that, I want to give you a very old word – perichoresis!!!

I remember hearing the speaker at a college presentation say that the 5 most important words were, “Wherever you are, BE THERE.” In other words, be present all the time. 90% of the time is simply not even good enough – it’s all the time that we must be there. And that is how I would like for us to examine our faith – our words and deeds - this Trinity Sunday. How are we present and live the Trinity 100% of the time and, how do we dance with the one God, in 3 parts? It is so much better to have a partner when you dance, isn’t it??

Every Sunday, we profess the Nicene Creed, a creed formulized in the fourth century that is constructed in Trinitarian, or 3 part formula: We believe in God the Father; we believe in God the Son, we believe in God the Holy Spirit. But be careful about this word, “creed.” The original understanding of “I believe,” or in Latin, “Credo.” It means to “give my heart to, give all my being, and give my loyalty and affection.” It’s larger than and different from the notion of Creed with which I

grew up, which seemed more like checking off three things that I agreed with.

“Credo” means giving me and being present 100% of the time. 100% of the time I give my heart to understanding God in this 3 part formula and, the thing I know, but sometimes strangely forget – God is there 100% in this relationship – never off duty: the theological term is “omnipresent.” So, explore with me this morning our faith as deeply rooted in our giving our heart to God in 3 interconnected persons 100% of the time. It is a relationship that grows and deepens and turns and changes; like a dance.

St Patrick taught the people of Ireland about this paradox by holding up a three-leaf clover – one clover; 3 parts all together: the Trinity.

While these constructions are helpful, they are limiting so I want to examine the Trinity, as the readings encourage us to look at God, as diversity in unity, particularly as we understand God in creation. Now that’s diversity!

I can no longer read the Bible, beginning with today’s passages from the Book of Proverbs and today’s Psalm without asking the vital question, “What am I doing as part of this creation, to be a steward, a caretaker of God’s creation – to honor and work towards the diversity of God as seen in God’s handiwork?”

That’s how I want to understand the Trinity on this Trinity Sunday. That’s how I want to be a disciple, to preach in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit - by understanding God as diversity in unity, as Creator of all that is good. There is no greater task as Christians than to honor God by honoring God’s creation – from the air we breathe, to the water we drink, to the plants we grow, to the people we love – we must view all as God’s creation and all as part of God.

“In the beginning...God created...” These most famous opening words of the Bible, and of Genesis, highlight two awe-inspiring and incontestable truths. One, the opening words of

Scripture place the emphasis on the Eternal One who is without beginning or end – GOD! God alone existed in the beginning. And 2: the origin and dependence of all creation upon God. “God created the heaven and the earth.”

God’s creation of the universe by the word of God’s own command occurs in a dramatic flurry of activity in the first chapter of Genesis. Light bursts forth to separate from darkness; the firmament divides the waters from the waters; the sky stands like a great canopy over the whole earth; sprouting, fruit-bearing vegetation lavishly covers the landscape. Living creatures of every kind – look at the diversity – traverse the seas. The sea is suddenly alive with creeping animals and the sky alive with winged birds in flight. Can one ever tire of this picture? Very cool.

God’s crowning achievement is the creation of humankind – male and female – in God’s own image – US! God has blessed and equipped humankind to function responsibly as God’s people on the earth. And, according to today’s Gospel, Jesus still has much to say to us! But we “cannot bear them now.” The Spirit of truth will guide us into all truth. The Holy Spirit – boy have we been talking a lot about her these past few weeks. Father, Son, Holy Spirit, the Spirit that will guide us into all truth. The Trinity - all is a delicate dance or balance between these three parts of God and we as God’s creations and stewards also have a balance to be kept with this beautiful world, our island home. We are all about relationships.

In short, when I pollute the world, when I squander its resources, when I waste food, I am hurting God. Learning how to respect and work for safer, cleaner world for the present and future generations, is a Trinitarian as well as ecological concern.

Precise language about the nature of the Trinity is impossible but here is the word for this day- from The Eastern Church - the word *perichoresis* to describe the ‘interpenetration’ of the members of the Trinity. God’s deepest essence is a shared exchange of love (a choreography, a “dancing around”) welling

up from the center of God's hidden life, and expression of God's excess and exuberance of joy. Diversity, exorbitance and surplus of beauty is what celebrating the Trinity is all about. (*Earth Letter*, May 2002, p. 7)

I like to follow a simple three fold pattern, REDUCE, REUSE and THEN RECYCLE, this ecology motto has become a way we have made decisions about recycling cell phones, computers, buying renewable energy, water, lights, plantings, curricula for children and adults – the list goes on and on.

Let us continue to make significant changes to our lifestyles as we continue to explore what it means to be a steward of God's creation, but if we do them in the spirit of self-examination and in faith, we know they will be the right ones.

This reflective approach – in our study, prayer and actions can "... follow the pattern of food webs in nature itself – interrelating everything, feeding waste and excess back into the health of the larger system. (We can) model the dance, the *perichoresis*, of the Holy Trinity.

If we will survive as a family of species in this biosphere (and I believe that we will), the patterns of our behavior – the house-rules by which we live together in the *oikos* (the home of the world) – will have to imitate the exchange of love and the reciprocity that characterize God's own innermost being ("*Earth Letter*, p. 8). That is what it means to both BE THERE 100% of the time and to give our hearts – CREDO to God as Trinity.
AMEN