

**Trinity Sunday  
(June 15, 2014)**

**What God Is Like**

Not so long ago I heard a first grade teacher in a Catholic school recount the following incident. Her pupils were having art class and drawing pictures. She came across one little girl who was obviously very hard at work on her drawing project. The teacher looked over her shoulder and asked her, "What are you drawing?" She replied, "It's a picture of God." The teacher responded as gently as she could, "But nobody knows what God looks like." Without missing a beat, the child replied, "They will when I am through."

I guess in some way we would all like to know what God looks like, but of course it's difficult to picture God since God is pure spirit. However in spite of that, it seems to me that the Feast we celebrate today can give us some idea of what God is *like*, and maybe even of what God looks like.

So what am I talking about? First of all, today is Trinity Sunday, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Actually I think we celebrate this feast every day, every time we make the sign of the cross since we always do it in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This tells us something about what God is like. God is not only one God as Jews and Muslims believe along with us. But we Christians believe that God is also three, three persons in one God. Now that is a mystery, a mystery, not in the sense of a puzzle to be solved like Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, but a reality to be lived, impossible to really understand. Greater minds than ours have tried and failed. For instance you have probably heard the story of St. Augustine. Before he was baptized, we are told, one day he was walking along the beach pondering this mystery and asking himself over and over again, "Three persons in one God, how can that be?" Suddenly he came across a little boy who had dug a hole in the sand and was going back and forth to the sea with a shell gather some water and emptying it into the hole. Augustine asked him what he was doing and he replied that he was emptying the ocean into this little hole. Augustine looked at him in astonishment and said, "But that's impossible."

The little boy said. “And it’s just as impossible for you to understand how there can be three persons in one God.” So we should not feel too bad if we have difficulty pondering the mystery of the Trinity.

Our readings today do not explain the mystery but they do tell us something about what this triune God is like. We could start with the last verse of our second reading where we heard a familiar greeting from St. Paul to the Corinthians, “The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . What is grace? A theology professor I had many years ago told us that grace is what happens to us when God looks on us with love. In the Gospel we heard Jesus tell Nicodemus, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” Jesus is God’s gift to us. It’s the ultimate sign of God’s favor, God’s grace incarnate. How we respond to that grace is our gift to God.

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the love of God. . . . The love of God: we know that God loves us all and that God wants us to love him back. But we must always remember that what comes first is God’s love for us. The Scriptures emphasize that God has loved us first and that our love for God is only a fitting response. Today’s first reading from Exodus tells us that “the Lord is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.” This is a God who shows infinite patience with us, enters our lives, acts within our history, forgives our sins, and works for our salvation. I have read that the Hebrew word for merciful is derived from the word for womb. So in addition to all the rest, this is a God who loves us with a mother’s love. This is the God whom we call the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a God in whom we experience the very best of what it means to be both Father and Mother.

And the fellowship or communion of the Holy Spirit. . . . Last week, Pentecost Sunday, we celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. The Spirit is the abiding presence of God in the Church and in our lives. The Holy Spirit guides, empowers, and teaches us in Christ’s place. The Holy Spirit brings us together in faith hope and love. The Holy Spirit gives life to the Christian community. We live our Christian lives in the fellowship or communion formed by the Holy Spirit.