Trinity Sunday All Saints Church

June 16, 2019 Year C

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 Romans 5:1-5

Psalm 8 John 16:12-15

Out of the mouths of infants and children your majesty is praised above the heavens.

There’s a popular joke Sicilians tell on themselves, and last week when I was in Italy and with some of my Sicilian friends, I heard it again:

When Almighty God created the world and everything in it, God had tiny bits of every continent left over. Satisfied, he took the bits together and kneaded it all into a lump and slapped it down on the new world. Bingo- there was Sicily.

The angels were astonished, “Wow, so beautiful. An absolute paradise- only the best bits from all the continents.”

“Right,” says God, “isn’t it wonderful?!”

“Yes,” fluttered the angels, moving in closer, “but the other parts of the world will be green with envy. There’ll be a hullabaloo…. Not a good way to start.”

The Almighty took their point, “What shall I do?”

“You need to even things up a bit,” whispered the angels.

So, God created Sicilians.

After laughing with my friends, I said, “I can’t tell that joke; it makes me sound racist.”

“Oh no, that’s the whole point,” said one of my friends. “(And it gives the Sicilians the last laugh). While everyone is thinking it’s a joke about crazy emotional Sicilians, it’s really about the creation of crazy humanity. The joke is on you; on all of us!!”

And then (which happens often) my Sicilian friends wax and wane philosophically, if not poetically: “God created this incredible world, and then what does he do but put humans on the face of the earth, with the power to ruin it.

“We Sicilians think that the first act after the creation of the world, was ***this Test*** for God, which brought him great suffering: Was he going to really give humans free will? In other words, if humans have freedom, God won’t be holding all the cards. Was he really going to let that happen? God was in a conundrum: there’s really no human life without freedom, and by extension no faith, but where was that freedom going to take the world?”

And then another friend added, “God’s first Test. Actually, The Test of All Tests. And God struggles, suffers even, but in the end, God says, ‘Yes’ to Humanity’s freedom.”

And then another friend added, “when we are suffering, (and we suffer a lot), we are being hurled back to the very beginning of the cosmos, when humanity was born out of a Test and out of Suffering. Yes, we can take comfort when we are suffering, because we are in the midst of God’s suffering and creative angst, as well, and it makes us feel less alone.”

I’m always reminded when I travel internationally how differently people can think, based in their history, their myths, their geography, their time, their language, their poetry, and I love the way it makes me see the world and my own life with new eyes. As the Sicilians say, “to read the language between the trees.”

I think this is a very powerful theological insight: When you are in the midst of suffering, allow yourself to feel “hurled back” to creation- to God’s first Test of suffering, because there you can feel God’s empathy, God’s solace, God’s capacity to relate, and in that company, you can move forward with heart, with courage and insight.

It’s at creation. It’s tangible. It’s the stuff of the Spirit that gives you strength to continue.

I am reminded of Michelangelo’s painting of the Sistine chapel, in the Vatican, where God is reaching out to bring life to Adam’s limp hand. There’s a tiny gap between the fingers… a nano-second before humanity’s springing. If you look carefully, you can see a woman in the crook of God’s left elbow, seemingly supporting God’s act of creation. God needed her. We refer to her as Sophia, Wisdom, Logos, the Christ… We hear her voice this morning:

When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundation of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race (Proverbs 8:22-31).

I know technically Trinity language does not show up in the Bible, but I think with a little imagination we can see the “Dance of the Trinity”[[1]](#footnote-1) here: God the Creator, reaching a hand across the abyss to awaken life; Sophia/Logos the Supporter, who will later emerge as the Redeemer, the Christ; and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Delight.

In this dance of creation, through redemption and sustenance, we are given wisdom, a spiritual perception, which allows us to see things clearly, “a kind of night vision that allows us to see with inner certainty the elusive golden thread glimpsed from within actually does lead somewhere” (Summary drawn from *The Heart of Centering Prayer*, Cynthia Bourgeault, p. 54).

Saint Paul says it differently when he writes, “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” He is suggesting that faith is not walking into something blindly, not at all, but rather, faith is the capacity to see in the dark.

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On Trinity Sunday we celebrate the Power of our Creator and the Love of our Redeemer and the Delight of the Holy Spirit.

I think that the work of the Holy Spirit is to help us see in the dark. That’s her job! We cannot do without the Holy Spirit’s work. The Third Person… adds the “juice,” the dance, which defines the Trinity as dynamic and relational. (For further discussion, see Richard Rohr).

Last Sunday, I joined my friend Maria in a Catholic Mass at Pontificio Collegio Irlandese: the Irish College Seminary. And the sermon by the Rev. Thomas Norris emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit’s work by quoting the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras:

Without the Holy Spirit, God the Father is far away, Christ remains in the past, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is a simple organization, authority a domination, mission a propaganda, worship mere ritual, and Christian action a slave mortality… But in the Spirit, the risen Christ is present, the Gospel is the power of life, the Church is Trinitarian communion, authority is a liberating service, the missions are a Pentecost, the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation, and human activity is divinized, deified.

What power!! That’s what Jesus is talking about this morning when he says, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own.”

We are not alone. The Dance of the Trinity, energized by Holy Delight, allows us to see in the dark. To have faith. To become co-creators with God/Christ/and Holy Spirit, so that we too, like God, hurled back to the very beginning of Creation, will in the end say, ‘Yes’ to Humanity’s freedom, to our faith-power, to our capacity to reach across the abyss, with SophiaWisdomChrist in the crook of our own elbow, so that we too can awaken life and love.

AMEN

1. Rohr, Richard, *The Divine Dance:* *The Trinity and Your Transformation*, New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)