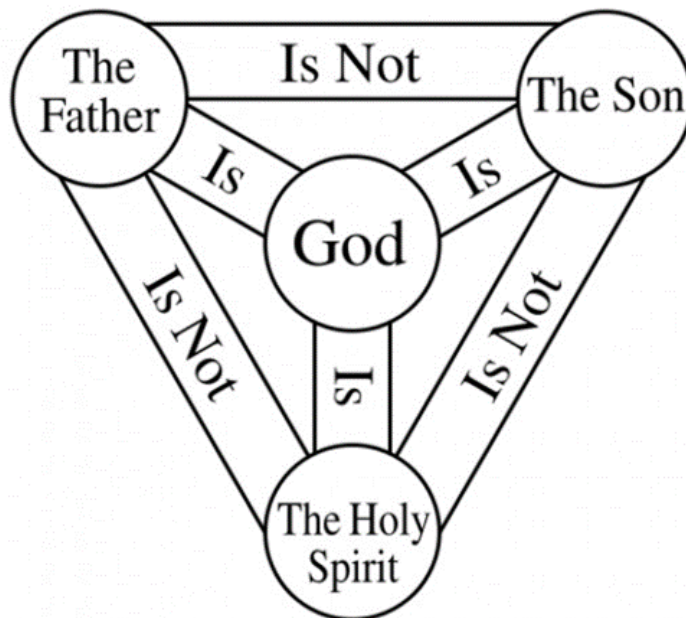


I feel like I haven't been up here at the ambo for quite some time. It's actually true. I've been out of town for much of May, and it's great to be back. One of the real highlights of traveling, especially to other countries, is to witness the way ordinary people live "over there". What I see often surprises me – not because it's weird, but because it is so similar to what *we all do and want*. What do they want? Peace, decent housing, happy and healthy children, a sense of purpose, and a good soccer team to root for. Despite what you might think, 99% of the people I meet in Europe have no desire to trade passports with us. Like all of us, they prefer to bloom where they're planted. One simple message – if you can afford it, get yourself out of your local bubble and experience the wider world. Building relationships with those who don't share our culture is the best avenue I've ever seen to attaining understanding and mutual respect. It's also very Trinitarian!

If I were to ask you to define the Trinity, I suspect most of you would immediately say "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit". It's not a wrong answer, but it can miss a key point.



A better answer defines the Trinity as "one God in three persons," noting in particular "one God". Notice in the Gospel reading how Jesus paints a picture of God as a mutual conversation among the Spirit of truth, a Father of all-knowledge, and a Son who has so much to tell us. Each person speaks in the name of the other, never in contradiction, but always as a gift to us who yearn to hear and understand. It's tempting to emphasize the

differences among the three persons of the Trinity, at least as we understand them, when the message of Jesus is strikingly unitarian. God is one! Then why, you may rightfully ask, is there all of this talk about Trinity? What value is there in the distinction?

I think that the answer is simple – God wants to make it easier on us. As human beings, we are each different people. I am here, you are there. I live in this town, you live in that one. I have this car, you have that one. Straightforward, but completely unhelpful when speaking of God. God is not an external being, someone out there, someone we can point at and say, look, there's God. God, my friends, is being itself, God is existence itself, *God is*. Trying to understand such a concept makes our heads hurt, and God surely is well aware of our confusion and yes, frustration. We have a hard time speaking about loving God when there's no apparent "being" to love. So God gave us a being to love. God took on a human body, aided and abetted by a young girl of Nazareth, and injected God's self into human history. If God the Father is the author of the Big Bang, that immense flash of pure light, then Jesus the Christ is heralded by the light of a star. Big bang, bright star. What's next? Remember last Sunday, Pentecost? What signifies the Holy Spirit's arrival? Yes, a tongue of fire. Note the progression. Big Bang, bright star, tongue of fire. Creation, Incarnation, and now, Fire of the Spirit that is given to each of us. Universal action first, specific global time and place second, and now an individual gift to every person who asks to understand. If it feels like God is zeroing in on you, then you've got it right!

So how does this look in real life? Check out this picture.



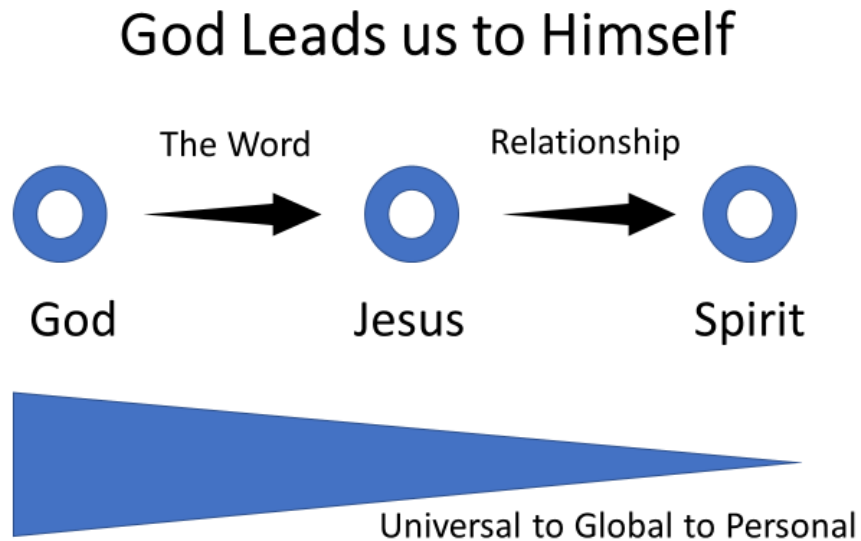
Do you see this red speck in the middle here? That's a person climbing El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. If this mountain is God, and this person is seeking to understand God, where's Jesus in this picture? Don't get too literal, but I'd say the Jesus is the rope, the way up, the path. And the Spirit? Where's the Spirit? The Spirit is the motivation, the idea planted in her head that says, "You can do this – you can climb this mountain."

So here's my question for you. What's your mountain? What is the Spirit saying to you? How is the Spirit challenging you? It may appear as daunting as this mountain. It may seem impossible. But the Spirit is planting the seed. It comes to us in words like this:

- You need to reconcile with that family member before it's too late.
- You need to change jobs – this one is killing you and drawing you away from me.
- You need to encounter me in the Holy Land, to walk the roads that I did.
- You need to take me into the prison, into the hospital, into the immigration center, into the pain of the world.
- You need to teach me to those who need to hear.

Sound at all familiar? These resonate with me because I have personally heard every one of these challenges. You want to know my answer to each

of these challenges? What? Are you kidding? I can't do that. How? And the Spirit says, follow Jesus. Follow the star. Follow the pattern back up. Tongue of fire seeks the star, fire attracting fire, star is drawn to the source of its light, all in all – God, one and true.



The Trinity is not simply a description of God, it is a roadmap to revelation, a roadmap to excitement, a little danger, some confusion, but peace and joy encouraging us when we most need it. I can't think of a more fascinating and fulfilling journey than the journey into the heart and mind of God.

It's hard to believe that only 3 weeks ago, we were in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. It was mid-morning on a Sunday, and this immense Church was swarming with people. The church holds about 60,000 people, so there was still plenty of room to maneuver. I wondered what all of these people were thinking. Many were devoutly moving from one statue or mosaic to another. Others were in full-blown tourist mode, taking selfies left and right. Katie and I wandered toward the front, aware that a Mass was about to begin. There was a large roped off area and an aisle leading up to the altar. Suddenly, a procession appeared walking up the aisle. By the vestments, I could identify 3 cardinals, at least 20 priests, and a number of acolytes in the procession. As they progressed up the roped off aisle, I again wondered what the watching people were thinking. And then, as if from the heavenly hosts themselves, the organ opened up with an immense blast of music and totally overwhelmed the buzzing of the tourists. It's as if God was speaking.

Tears leapt to our eyes as we drank in the immensity and the reality that the way to God is facilitated by the Church, is facilitated by the merging of all of these people throughout history who answered the challenge of the Holy Spirit and inspired others to follow the path of Christ to God the Father.

The Trinity is the roadmap – today we, the Church, celebrate the journey and thank God for his open invitation to share in the endless dance of Father, Son, and Spirit.