



SUNDAY SERMON

Dancing with the Trinity

At college, the late night reading rooms stayed open until 1:00 am, but the main library closed at 11:00 pm. Having plowed through too much reading and cranked out another 8-10 page essay on the assigned topic, I was ready to blow off steam before heading back to the dorm. So I'd stop by the college disco; these were the late 70's, early 80's. "YMCA" had been released my freshman year. Donna Summer topped the charts as queen of disco. Not my genre of choice but great music if you just want to let go. Maybe I'd get lucky and the DJ would be spinning Earth Wind and Fire or Stevie Wonder. The best part was I didn't have to have a date, plan ahead, or go with someone in particular. It was a hall with loud music, a spinning disco ball, filled with students dancing. I could just step into the flow and dance my way around with anyone who was there. I loved it. Night after night.

Perichoresis. Perichoresis. From the Greek, *peri* "around" and *chorein* ("chorein") "make space for" and "contain." So, to make space around. More specifically, the way in which someone or something makes space around itself for others. Perichoresis is a theological term used to describe the intertwining dance of the three persons of the Trinity.

The Trinity is the articulation of the relationship of God, Christ, and Holy Spirit – who are somehow both three and one. Sometimes described with particular attributes – creator, redeemer, sanctifier. Fascinating as it may be for some to attain to a full understanding of the doctrinal meaning of the Trinity, I find myself drawn toward the mystery, toward the relational, communal, accessible nature of the God we know in Christ through the indwelling breath of the Spirit.

For me as a Christian, the alluring call of a life with Christ comes not through knowing, solving, and understanding the nature of things. The beauty of God and the animating power of life with Christ comes through the indwelling and ever-alluring mystery of the Spirit. We do not need to solve the mystery; we are invited to live it. So do not ask: how am I to understand. Rather, wonder: how may I participate, to join in this dance of the Holy Trinity?

Last summer, walking along the beach watching the rhythm of waves, now surging, receding, leaping, crashing, gentle roll of pebbles and shells. The sandpipers run fro and to, then lift as one and alight beyond. The fin of a dolphin breaks the surface, disappears, prompts me to wonder of the life beneath, beyond what eye can see. Is there some way for me to participate, to join the dance?

At a party – a wedding perhaps, the dance is in full swing. I rise from the table, ready. The dancers move as one; step in, step left, dip down, twirl around, fluid,

continued

DATE

Trinity Sunday
Sunday, June 16, 2019

PREACHER

The Rev. Ledlie Laughlin

sensual. Someone beckons as they swirl by, laughing inviting, but is swept round, disappears beneath the surf.

So I leap, or think I leapt; for in truth 'twas already accomplished. For did not the dancers, the music, first swell and envelop me, the waves lure me in, the pipers and the salt air, the moon and grace irresistible, the love of those around us, the whispering breath of the spirit bid us in. We may imagine we are alone, that God is not here with us. And so we call for God or we go in search of God. When, in truth it is we, who were for a time, blind or lost to God's abiding, ever-animating presence. We leap, or think we leapt, for in truth 'tis already accomplished, we are already enveloped in the dance around us.

Said Jesus, in today's Gospel, as he bids his disciples farewell – says Jesus, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now... The spirit will come. The spirit will guide you."

There is no one way or right way to enter the surf. But there are people who by their lives show us the way. Perhaps someone you met or know revealed to you a hint of holy mystery and invited you in to follow. Pattie Ames is one such person. "Miss Pattie" she is to many. Many of you know her. For those who do not, for twenty-two years Pattie Ames has served St. Columba's as the Director of Children's Ministry. Pattie has invited, beckoned and led many, many, many of us into life with Christ.

How? By her presence. She knows your name; she knows your child's name. She is almost always smiling or laughing. She is almost always telling stories about Jesus and Jesus' love for each one of us. (Though she likes baseball, too!) She is always ready to say a prayer with you. She is often found in the playground, often accompanied by her dog Captain. At one time or another, she probably asked you to take a turn and teach Sunday School. Even if you were not sure you knew your Bible stories well enough or had what it takes to teach, she paved the way and showed you how. She may have been there for you in a time of need, as a friend, as a colleague, with understanding, with wisdom, care, and an open heart.

I believe Miss Pattie would prefer, though – on this day that we bid her good-bye and God-speed; I believe she would prefer that we focus our attention not on her, but on the one whom she follows, the one whom she loves – the one who is Jesus Christ our Lord. Whether you know her or not, I believe Miss Pattie would desire we each of us live this day by the light of our baptismal covenant. For in our baptism, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon each of us. In those water's we were enveloped in the dance of the trinity. What is that covenant? Let's renew it together now – as call and response: I will ask, and you respond, "I will with God's help."

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Each day, every day, as we strive, seek, proclaim, persevere thus do we participate in God's holy dance.

Here am I. Here you are. Here we are. We have our gifts today. We have our lives; our fears and wounds, our victories, our losses and our loves, fierce convictions, our hearts spilling over, our hopes and dreams. Today perhaps we feel distressed or confused; or perhaps renewed, blessed with clarity, and courage. Today perhaps the path is clear, or today we can see only enough – at least enough, thank God – to take the next step.

Even so. Here we are. We have our lives, our gifts. Our beautiful gifts – from God. It is enough. It is more than enough. It is an abundance. Lavish outpouring.

Thus, into the holy surf we leap, into the dance we swirl and twirl, inviting lovers and passers-by with our outstretched hands into the dance of the Trinity – Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit; love eternal. Come. Let us go forth. Amen.