

Trinity Times

A newsletter for the members and friends of Trinity Episcopal Church

Trinity Episcopal Church
The Episcopal Church in Athens since 1842
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Late Pentecost - October, 2020

Rumination: Theophanies vs. Idolatry Close Encounters of the Divine Kind

The Rev. Benjamin Lee Lentz

While preparing for sermons on the books of Genesis and Exodus, I found myself revisiting the presence of God to the children of Israel in physical (not necessarily human) form: theophanies. Frequently these theophanies are angelic in manifestation, but we all know that they are really God: Abraham and his three guests; Jacob wrestling with an angel; the angel blocking the path of Balaam and his ass. Yet at other times God appears in other physical forms: a flaming sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, a burning bush, a pillar of fire, column of smoke.

At a time when it was sincerely believed that if you looked upon the face of God that you would die, God found other ways to come to his people without scaring the bejeezus out of them. The idea of 'no pictures' was later fortified by the second commandment: no graven images. God didn't want any idols, even of him. This meant there were no opportunities for a Kodak moment with God.

This did not stop the Italian artists of 13th century when the flood-gates of God's family photo album were opened.

I am by no means an artist, let alone an art critic. However, the difference between these two depictions of "Creation of Adam" is that mine (on left) has portrayed neither God nor Adam as being white, whereas Michelangelo's (above) has.



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I understand that the Bible says that God made humanity in God's image, but since we have no actual pictures of God, we infer that God must look like us. That, by the way, is called anthropomorphism. Just imagine, if Michelangelo had been a rabbit, his painting of God, Adam and Eve in Eden might have been more like this:



Since there are no rabbit artists (or very few), and even more sadly, if you do a quick internet search for images of God, they are

all old white men; if you do one for images of Jesus, almost all are white; angels and cherubs, all white. Even when I did a search specifically for a black Jesus, many of them were only people with European features with darker skin.

I understand that most of the paintings I found were created by Europeans and not rabbits and that an artist usually paints what they can most readily relate to – especially when they don't have an actual model. I also recognize that for the most part, the paintings are done to honor God and his Son. In a sense, although not technically, we might even view them as theophanies, physical representations to make 'real' the inexpressible.

There are, however, people who under the guise of 'artistic license' have co-opted this genre for their own misguided and sometimes outright devious agendas. In doing so, they have broken the commandment forbidding idols.

For instance, I also found a white Jesus arm wrestling the devil – a black devil. Devils are always red or black. I found a white Jesus standing behind and with his hands on the shoulders of a seated Donald Trump. I found a white Jesus wrapped in the American flag. These are not theophanies; this is idolatry.

Perhaps most importantly, we need to remember that people of color also worship God and his Son (that shouldn't be surprising) and that they have every right to question the artist's interpretation, especially when used in America for political and racial superiority.



Let's remember, there are no actual pictures of Jesus or God or members of the divine court – the Divine still adheres to the 'no Kodak moments' rule. Perhaps a children's Christmas carol expresses it best:

Some children see Him lily white,
The baby Jesus born this night....
Some children see Him bronzed and brown,
The Lord of heav'n to earth come down....

Some children see Him almond-eyed,
This Savior whom we kneel beside....
Some children see Him dark as they,
Sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray.

The children in each different place
Will see the baby Jesus' face
Like theirs, but bright with heavenly grace...

[*Some Children See Him* (abridged), Wihla Hutson & Alfred Burt, 1951]

No idolatry in that!

Fini.



Trinity Episcopal Church - October 2020

Late
Pentecost

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Trinity Cycle of Prayer: 10/4 Fr. Ben, Andrea and Theo Lentz. 10/11 Anna Markevitch, Dorothea West. 10/18 Helen and Larry McNeal. 10/25 Jon, Wendy, Kim and Kate Murray.			<i>Our sister Diocese of Kajo Keji:</i> 10/4 St. Mark Ajiio Parish. 10/11 Pasiki Parish. 10/18 St. Joseph Kala. 10/27 Woro Parish and Romogi-Barebo Primary School.	1 AA 5:15 pm AA 8:00 pm <i>Chris & Heather Hunsinger</i>	2	3 Virtual Diocesan Convention 8-1
4 Pentecost 18 P-22 10:00 Holy Eucharist II Spiritual Communion St. Francis Day Blessing of the Animals <i>Carla Ross</i>	5 AA 8:00 pm <i>Carla Ross</i>	6 <i>Stacey Baster</i>	7 AA Intergroup 5 pm AA 7:30 pm <i>Kathy Patterson Tom & Shannon Bubniak</i>	8 AA 5:15 pm AA 8:00 pm	9	10 <i>Brandon Hunsinger</i>
11 Pentecost 19 P-23 10:00 Holy Eucharist II Spiritual Communion <i>John Bubniak</i>	12 AA 8:00 pm	13 <i>Meredith Beck Mentzel</i>	14 AA 7:30 pm	15 AA 5:15 pm AA 8:00 pm	16	17 <i>Tom & Kathe Maneval Brandon Bubniak</i>
18 Pentecost 20 P-24 10:00 Holy Eucharist II Spiritual Communion --Vestry Meets ---	19 St. Luke the Evangelist AA 8:00 pm	20	21 AA 7:30 pm	22 AA 5:15 pm AA 8:00 pm	23 St. James of Jerusalem	24
25 Pentecost 21 P-25 10:00 Holy Eucharist II Spiritual Communion <i>Fanna Proper</i>	26 AA 8:00 pm	27	28 St. Simon & St. Jude, Apostles AA 7:30 pm <i>Isabella Hill</i>	29 AA 5:15 pm AA 8:00 pm	30 <i>Don Barton</i>	31 <i>Grace Barton</i>

All Saints' Day at
Trinity is Sunday,
November 1,
Renewal of
Baptismal Vows



Anglicans Around the World: 10/4 The Anglican Church of Tanzania, Archbishop Maimbo Mndolwa. 10/11 The Church of the Province of Uganda, Archbishop Stephen Samuel Kaziimba. 10/18 The Episcopal Church, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry. 10/25 The Church in Wales, Archbishop John Davies.



Bethlehem: 10/4 Christ Church, Reading: The Rev. John Francis, Deacon Midge Pendergast; Liturgy & Music Commission. 10/11 St. Mary's, Reading: The Rev. Ellie Hart. Clergy of the Diocese. 10/18 Redeemer, Sayre, The Rev. Melinda Artman. Pennsylvania Council of Churches. 10/25 St. James', Schuylkill Haven, The Rev. Jeffrey Funk.

October at Trinity

Sundays at 10 a.m. - Holy Eucharist II and Sermon with Spiritual Communion

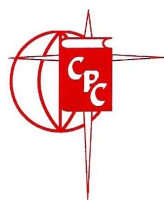
Saturday, October 3 - Virtual Diocesan Convention, 8 to 1. For more information, visit the diocesan web site - www.diobeth.org. Our delegate is Laura Cama.

Sunday, October 4 - St. Francis Day Observance

Vestry meets October 18 following worship.



Our **UTO Ingathering** was September 27. However, if you forgot your Blue Box or check, you can place them in the offering plate any time in the next few weeks. Be sure to take a new Blue Box home for the coming year. No pennies, please! Save those for:



Church Periodical Club

Have you noticed the large glass jar on the buffet near the baptismal font? That's where we collect pennies throughout the year for the CPC. This is where you can put the pennies we ask you not to put in your blue box. It is dedicated solely to providing free literature and related materials, both religious and secular, to people all over the world who need and request them and who have no other source for obtaining them. Prayer Books, books for seminarians, educational materials, medical textbooks, agricultural manuals and books for those in local and global mission are some of the publications The Church Periodical Club supplies.

Vestry News:

Buildings: As of press day, we still do not have heat in the church building. Thankfully, it hasn't been too terribly cold. Yet. The rectory chimney has been completely rebuilt above the roof line and wrapped and resurfaced from the ground up. Cosmic Artisans did a beautiful job on this project.

Outreach: We have collected items for the Abuse and Rape Crisis Center, which is the focus of our ongoing outreach efforts. Marie Bubniak has coordinated this effort, creating baskets for personal, kitchen, and laundry items. We also collect sample sizes of shampoo, soap, toothpaste, etc. for either the ARCC or local high schools. Grocery items are currently donated to Sayre High School's student food pantry. You may place items in the large basket by the baptismal font any Sunday.

Worship: Our three intrepid Worship Leaders/Lay Readers, Dan and Marny Gerhart and Barbara Caum have been rotating Sundays since we re-opened in July. If you would like to be a lector, and read the Old Testament lesson, please let Fr. Ben or one of the Worship Leaders know.

Altar Guild: If you're interested in helping with this ministry, please talk to Barbara or Marny. While it is simpler now, there are still linens to be cared for and silver and brass to polish.

Gifts from Grace church: The Stations of the Cross and the Christus Rex, will be installed soon; when this is done, they will be dedicated during our regular Sunday worship.

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To seek and serve Christ in all people