

God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity

How do you refer to God? Take a moment and reflect on that.

If you're comfortable in doing so, I invite you to turn to someone nearby, or get up and move if you want to share with someone different. Yes, we can be loud in church, it is ok! Let's take about two minutes to do this. Go!

Now that our two minutes are up, is there anyone who would like to share their images of God or how they refer to God? Some may say, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," while others may say "Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier." Others just want to let the Trinity be the Trinity without assigning any names at all, or at least names that don't reflect a gender. Others have been raised with the traditional, and that works for them. I say, whatever works for you and your relationship with God, is ok!! Go with it!! We've slowly tried to incorporate various images of God in our worship in the past four and a half years.

Today, many Christian churches celebrate Trinity Sunday, One God in Three Persons. There have been many ways that theologians have tried to explain this in an attempt to make it more real for Christians. Some of the serious attempts have failed. For example, if you wanted to say that the Trinity could be explained by The Father in the Old Testament, the Son in the Gospels or New Testament, and the Holy Spirit of today, you'd commit the heresy of Modalism. Arianism was the heresy that Jesus was a created being and not begotten of the Father. Tritheism errs by treating the three persons of the Trinity as separate and distinct Gods who work together. So, what is safe?

One visual way is that if you use one candle or light source and light all three from that one source, do we have three sources or one unit? Some tried to explain with $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$, God in three persons. They were on the right track, but it could be better explained by saying $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. This makes this former Math educator happy!

We assign the same value to the Three Persons and still have ONE God.

It is the ONE that I'd like to concentrate on today. We can go back to last week's reading where Jesus prayed, "Father, may they be one as we are one." Regardless of how we refer to the Trinity, we have to work on our "oneness" or unity as Christians. This becomes important for us as First Congregational Church of Westfield and Southwick Congregational Church. As you recall, we talked about how things can simultaneously be the same yet different. The two churches are both Christian, both Congregational in denomination, but different in that they are in different towns. Southwick is affiliated with the UCC, while First Congregational is affiliated with the UCC and NACCC, or as they call it, the "NA."

Regardless of affiliation, the two churches have enjoyed a partnership of sharing a pastor. While one in the name of the Trinity, they each have their own finances, property, and leadership. There is nothing wrong with that; it is a good thing as both churches are

unique. We have people from Westfield who are members of Southwick, while people from Southwick are members in Westfield. Both are ONE in the fact that each regards Jesus Christ as head of the church.

The Holy Spirit has put the two churches together again to discern what steps to take as a spiritual guide and a pastor. This goes beyond working together to share a pastor. My prayer for the leadership of both churches is that they will come together, pray together, and make something more than a business deal to intentionally call someone who can and will serve both churches as pastor.

There is a hymn that came out during the “folk song” period of the 60s, “They’ll Know We Are Christians.” A Catholic priest wrote it for a youth choir set to perform at the time at avant-garde ecumenical and interracial services. The words of the song are appropriate for us today as we celebrate Trinity Sunday and work together to bring about the Reign of God on earth.

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.

Chorus: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our
love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride.

All praise to the Father, from whom all things come;
And all praise to Christ Jesus, His only Son.
And all praise to the Spirit who makes us one.

Let this be our prayer on this Trinity Sunday and as we move
forward, together! May it be so! Amen!

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