



Last Saturday, Sarah and I were coming back from her brother's high school graduation to our home in Cleveland Heights. We knew the protests had started in Cleveland that day/night, but as we drove up 71 with the city skyline ahead of us, we didn't see any fires or smoke from afar. The usual buildings were lit up in multi-colored displays. However, once we got to Carnegie to start heading east...not so much. The State Highway Patrol had setup barricades on the exit ramp. Chester Avenue?

No dice. Of course, Highway 2 going west into downtown was blocked off (not that we wanted to go that way). Barricades: perhaps more so for others' safety, maybe to minimize the possibility of more protestors adding fuel to an anguish-filled fire, of sorts, ensuing on the city streets. I had no interest getting involved anyway in a most tense environment that's beyond my mental, physical, even spiritual fortitude...but I'm not completely sure that's a good thing.

This Holy Trinity Sunday is my annual "it's complicated" response in any half-attempt to explain a most complex theological doctrine for me, at least. I cannot fully understand the whole one God/three persons most holy existence, and I've more than reached the point of being fully comfortable with knowing the Holy Trinity depth is beyond my mortal pay-grade. I'm not about to buy all the scholarly books and read through the most detailed articles to try to figure the divine essence out. It's not that I've given up on the whole Father, Son, Holy Spirit emphasis of God's immense activity in the world, including in our own personal faith connection with God. I'm just okay with it being a surreal holy mysteriousness, in a way, allowing God to be God for the world, for me; being perfectly fine with learning more and more about God along the way, yes, while, also, being proven wrong plenty of times along the way as well.

Nevertheless, in my current mortal pay-grade level understanding of the Holy Trinity, I'm still drawn to the idea of the Three being so closely connected together, that we cannot possibly separate one from the other. We sometimes like to pinpoint one member of the sacred Trinity in terms of which One we pray to, for instance, or assigning only God the Son as responsible for the eternal-shaping work on the cross, among other divine activities for the sake of the whole world. Except, it's a holy team operation, of sorts. When One shows up, the entire Trinity is at work: whether it be Creation, crucifixion, Resurrection and throughout all eternity. They are so incredibly close, that God, somehow, someway, is still One. Yes, "it's complicated."

And I wonder about our current point in our collective mortal pay-grade timeline. Some of us would say, regarding current events: "it's complicated," to say the least. Nevertheless, hopefully...I sincerely hope we can acknowledge that far too many people in our country, and beyond, still immediately react with negative suspicions about those they see with darker skin color than themselves. However, we don't want to go too far in saying that their lives specially matter, in case it may come off to others that we're promoting that not other lives matter, too, including those in uniform (even though we lift up specific individuals and groups of people in our prayers of intercession pretty much every Sabbath, but minor detail). We don't want to get too deep into the police brutality subject, because we don't want others to think that we now believe all police are prone to such heinous acts of violence against a certain race. We don't want to appear as if we support any kind of protests, no matter how peaceful they proclaim their anguish, because then others might think we support those select few who are out to start full-

blown riots that may tear entire cities apart. So...it's easier to stick with "it's complicated," and, well... firmly setup our own personal barricades from allowing ourselves even the wondering thought to get in too deep, from crossing over to that other side to those far too many infested with outright trepidation over their own well-being.

I like to think the Holy Trinity dealt with a fair share of barricades from the very humanity the Trinity shaped and molded in such a divine image: of all the times humanity was convinced it could handle the earthly operation by them(our)selves. All the times humanity thought it didn't need saved from its war-torn, divisions-galore, downright-greedy selves. All the times, Jesus (the entire Holy Trinity) had the perfect opportunity to say the cross wasn't worth it, after all, with how God in Christ was betrayed, spat upon, beaten, not to mention all the times when the ministry of love and grace and hope was attempted to be limited whatsoever...so many insistent barricades setup when God attempted to take us all on the ramp to eternal life. And yet, every time...*every single* time, God thoroughly and proudly annihilates the attempts to slow the Holy Trinity universal-altering operation down.

It's time, it's more than time, to take down our own personal barricades that we've setup over our lifetime for own personal comfort. It's time to pull off a ministry of crossing into the lives who are scared. We will have to get uncomfortably close for some of us, because it will involve the humble act of emphatically listening. It will mean laying down our own personal biases and pre-conceived judgments for however long it takes to understand what another person goes through in their daily life. It will take reading books and articles from a completely different perspective that are absolutely gut-wrenching, watching first-person accounts that may make us cringe. It will be devastating and exhausting beyond belief, at times, but that's how the world can often be on the other side of the barricades.

Granted, it happens for us from time-to-time, too, and we can share those stories as well, when the time comes. But, hopefully...hopefully during such sacred moments of barricade-crossing-over, we will see first hand how God envisioned the world from the beginning: no barricades setup at all between skin colors, income, education, job titles, religion...anything humanity has ever come up with over our time together. No matter how firm the barricade, the Holy Trinity will find a way to take it down with the same holy force that took down death itself. Thanks be to God, indeed! Amen (so let it be...please, let it be)!