

Year C*Pentecost 8*Proper 11*2010*Abraham and Mary
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When I cross myself and invoke the Holy Trinity before each sermon I mean it.
It's not just a way to tell you it's time to sit down.

I want to praise the Holy Trinity.
I hope my words will draw us closer to God,
open us to God,
maybe even reveal God.

So here's a little meatier prayer to the Holy Trinity to begin this sermon.

*O Everlasting and Triune God, I consecrate myself wholly to you today.
Let all my days offer you ceaseless praise,
my hands move to the rhythm of your impulses,
my feet be swift in your service,
my voice sing constantly of you,
my lips proclaim your message,
my eyes perceive you everywhere,
and my ears be attuned to your inspirations.*

*Let my intellect be filled with your wisdom,
my will be moved by your beauty,
my heart be enraptured with your love,
and my soul be flooded with your grace.*

*Grant that every action of mine be done for your greater glory and the advancement of my
salvation. Amen. (from a Catholic Prayer Book)*

We praise God, the holy and ever-blessed Trinity.

Today Abraham welcomes three mysterious visitors.
At first they are men, then they are angels then they are the Lord.
The story refers to the visitors as both three and one.
The ambiguity of the description of these three visitors who are also one opened the door to early
Christians to imagine an Old Testament anticipation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

This is the story which inspired Andre Rublev to paint (write) his famous icon *The Old Testament
Trinity*. Rublev, who has just been included in our list of saints, saw in the three visitors who are
also one no less than the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

I've placed Rublev's Trinity to the left of the altar for a season, this season. AS soon as the Holy
Spirit arrived on Pentecost Sunday all persons of the Holy Trinity are revealed. The very next
Sunday therefore is Trinity Sunday.

I've told you the story of my relationship with this icon so many times please indulge me one
more time and pretend you've never heard the story.

It happened years ago. I was a busy priest, married with two young children. My parish was growing, bustling really, quite exciting. I thought it was time to take a retreat and I did. I went to a monastery. "A retreat", I thought, "How exciting. I'll be able to catch up on my reading. Spend some serious time in prayer and contemplation. Get my batteries recharged for ministry."

At this monastery before you begin your retreat you sit down with a monk and talk a bit about it. My monk asked me, "What are going to be doing this week?" I told him about the books I planned to read and a strict regimen of prayer I planned to practice, the planning for a class I was preparing and . . .

He stopped me and said, "Why don't you just sit with God some and relax?"

"How do I do that?" I asked.

He said there would be an icon in my room. Why not just sit down with that icon and be with God. I said was "Okay, then can I read?"

I went back to my room in the guest quarters. It was quiet. In my room I found the icon my monk had said would be there. It was the icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrei Rublev.

So I set the icon on a table and knelt down on the floor before it. And immediately I heard a voice in my heart. It said, "'Oh, honey, we've missed you."

Oh honey, we've missed you.

The Holy Trinity, the source of all life, love, courage, justice, and salvation. . . missed me.

And I realized right away that I had been keeping my self away from the Mystery of God.

I realized how I use thinking and arguing and complaining to hide from God.

And that my God missed me. I cried.

Then I realized that there was an open space at the table, literally an open hole in my side of the table. The Icon writer Andrei Rublev made it that way on purpose. It is our entrance into the Holy Trinity and I began to enter.

We are invited into intimacy with God,
to enter the circle of God's love,
to sit at God's table.

Intimacy with God is a priority.

Isn't that the meaning of our wonderful gospel story.

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me."⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things;⁴² there is need of only one thing.¹ Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

¹Other ancient authorities read *few things are necessary, or only one*

O blessed Gospel calling us to worship,
to contemplate,
to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Women, men, children,
poor and rich,
radical left and right,
moderates and in-betweeners,
intellectuals and simple-folk,
all are called to intimacy with the Savior.

This place,
with it's Prayerbooks,
it's incense,
it's music,
it's wood and stone,
it's people,
is a living place calling the world to worship God.

Have we allowed busy-ness,
or work,
or entertainment,
or thinking,
to divert us from intimacy with God?
This is our most important work.

Last Sunday love of God and love of neighbor were placed side by side as two sides of one coin. In the "greatest commandment" we heard "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."¹ This is your scripture if you see clearly that worship is necessarily complimented by service. But that was last week. This week priority is given to worship. "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."² This is my scripture. This is my home. I believe the worship of God is our first priority, our most important work. Service flows from worship.

Right here, every third year, I remember one of our blessed dead, Margaret Cowden. Margaret was a servant of the servants of God here at St. Mary's. We're enjoying a cool sanctuary as one of the fruits of Margaret's service. Margaret gave the first air conditioning systems for the sanctuary. Can you imagine sitting in here today without air conditioning?

Every time this gospel story occurred, my gospel, I would preach a sermon just like this. And every time Margaret would say to me, right at that door, as she was leaving the church, "I wonder where Mary got her food?", or something like that. And I would say, "I have chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from me!"

¹*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 10:27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

²*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 10:42). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

God bless Margaret Cowden and all the great servants of God.

But today,
To sit at God's table,
to sit at the feet of Jesus,
this is our true work.

The Divine is calling us,
"honey, I've missed you".
The Three have missed us.
The One has missed us.

The Father is calling us.
The Son is calling us.
The Holy Spirit us calling.
The Holy and undivided Trinity is calling us to sit at the table of love,
to sit at the feet of Jesus.

We kneel on the floor and accept our place in the Mystery of God.