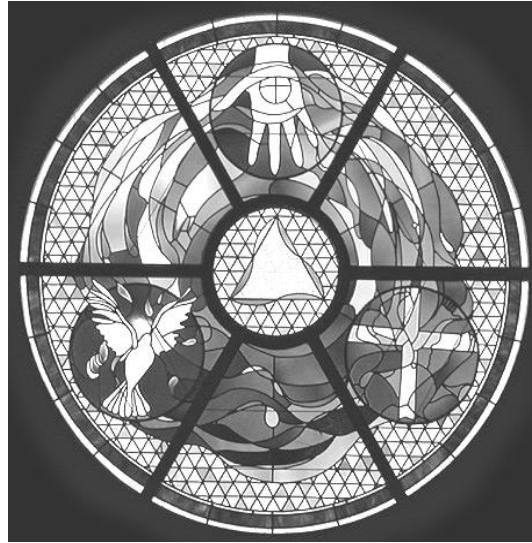


KEEPING IT HOLY!



Scripture:

Psalm 29

¹Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ²Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name; worship the LORD in holy splendor.

³The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters. ⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. ⁶He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. ⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, “Glory!”

¹⁰The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever. ¹ May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Romans 8: 12-17

¹²So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



TRINITY

Every year, after Pentecost, we celebrate Trinity Sunday. You can call it a theological feast day that commemorates our Holy God as three in one, Father/Son/Holy Spirit. Many artists have tried to depict what God as three in one in community with God-self might look like. See today's beautiful picture on page one below the sermon title of the Trinity stained glass window in Pennsylvania. It depicts the Trinity as a parent/mother/father God with the dove as the Holy Spirit, the hand as God and cross as Jesus all intertwined with beautiful triangles and flowing colors of the rainbow.

Meditate on this for a little while at home. What does the Trinity mean to you? How do you experience God and imagine God?

The Trinity is beautiful and mysterious and a concept created out of the many reflections in the Bible about the Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit all together in one Holy God. But you won't find the word "Trinity" in the Bible. In Latin it is Trinitas or Triad.

The term, Trinity, was first used by the first century theologian Theophilus of Antioch who was making an effort to explain the inter-relatedness of God, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Not until the third century did the theologian, Tertullian, describe in writing the way he understood God's essence from analyzing the scriptures. He looked at how the various characteristics we know of God inter-related. Tertullian proposed that the three "persons" of God are three equally important roles played by our one God - "consubstantial," meaning all of the same substance, not separate. Our Nicene Creed reflects on this same idea and describes our Triune God as "One in Being."

CELTIC SYMBOLS

No one can put God in a box or a triangle. Yet, it is natural to try to understand the breadth and depth of God. St. Patrick used the

three leaf clover to describe the Trinity to new believers in Ireland. We often see Celtic symbols of three in Celtic designs. The Trinity of three is everywhere in nature when you look for it.



This passage in Romans addresses all three components of God, the Abba (Father/Mother) persona, the Spiritual persona and the Jesus persona, all inter-relating and interdependent. We are created to be in the image of God, but rather than being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we are each body, mind, and spirit created to live in connection, in community, inter-dependently with one another with the Trinity interweaving within and around us.

FRIENDSHIP THREESOMES

Have any of you ever been part of a friendship three-some? Often the power in that group of three is not equal as it is in the Trinity. I had a three-some friendship all through my elementary school years. It was me, Marcia, and Jane. Sometimes we would let others play at recess, but usually it was the three of us running around the playground getting into trouble on our own.

We would often play blind man's bluff and one of us would be in the middle with our eyes closed while the other two would walk around arm in arm putting the blind one's hand up to things to touch so they could guess what they were touching.

There is a lot of trust in that game, which sadly was eroded when Jane and I decided to run Marcia down a hill with her eyes still shut and she fell and broke her leg! We did not live up to the beautiful image of the Trinity that day!

In fact, we never played the blind man's bluff game again. The Beatles became popular so we changed our three-some into a

four-some to have Paul, John, George and Ringo. And we performed their songs at recess.

We let our friend Susan join us as Ringo, because we thought she looked like him! Susan didn't care. She was glad to be included. I've reformed since then.

EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

I was just a normal kid living according to the flesh, which is a development stage we all go through. But it should end at around adolescence. As little children we respond with fear or negativity to the differences we see in the way people appear and act. We don't know any better. Guidance from our parents and teachers is needed to help us understand that even when someone doesn't look just like you, they are God's creation and like you in other ways and deserve your care and respect.

Empathy and compassion are born innately in us, but they are just seeds planted that need to be watered by our role models and teachers for them to blossom and flourish as we grow.

DON'T LIVE ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

That is what Paul was doing in this passage. He was teaching the people of the church in Rome to not live according to the flesh. See beyond the flesh to the real things that matter. Don't just live your life satisfying your immediate physical needs. Be mindful, spiritual, and soulful. Nurture your mind and your spirit, not just your body. Be children of God, not children of the flesh who just grab what they can from others to survive.

In other words, don't be a zombie. That is what this passage is basically saying. Did you know that the term "Zombie" is a Haitian French term? It refers to a "fictional undead being created through the reanimation of a human flesh corpse." The idea of a zombie first came from Haitian voodoo folklore. But

the first popular movie about zombies was the Night of the Living Dead (which I never saw) created in 1968.

Zombies are supposed to be just mindless, soulless beings wandering around looking to satisfy their hunger for flesh. (Which scientifically makes no sense; if they are dead, then they would not have hunger or a working digestive system. You never see a Zombie going to the bathroom in those movies do you?) I tend to over analyze and end up taking the fun out of scary movies.

FOCUS ON THE SPIRITUAL

Yet, the Apostle Paul was seriously speaking to the new church community in Rome, reminding them to not be enslaved by their physical attitudes and material needs or be slaves to fear and focus on the spiritual. When we center our lives on just fulfilling our physical needs, we are only addressing the needs of one dimension of our triune selves. Our minds and souls need refreshment, nurturing, and feeding, too.

"Take Time to be Holy" is one of my favorite hymns. It reminds us to take a Sabbath while the world rushes on, to take time to nurture and grow our faith through prayer and reading the Bible, and to take time for one another. Keeping it holy means to keep your life in balance in body, mind, and spirit, honoring your need for self-care by being in a church community that is supportive and one that engenders hope for the future.

COMMUNITY

Reverend Shannon Kershner wrote about how we are meant to be in community with one another as God role models interdependent Trinity community within Godself. She says: "If God, at God's very core, is about mutual interdependent relationships, then what does that say about the reality that we are created in God's image? We don't just exist beside each other, we exist for each other, we are meant to love each

other and deeply need support from community to be fully human.

To be Christ's body we can't exist well on our own separate from the family of God. You probably recall the research experiments on monkeys in the seventies that showed isolation away from other monkeys resulted in depression and early death despite being fed well. Even after being released back into a group, those who had been isolated could not reproduce. They had lost their ability to socialize and often were dangerously aggressive as a result of having been confined for just one year with no interactions with others including humans.

WE NEED HUMAN INTERACTION

There are many who protest the use of dark solitary confinement in prisons for the same reasons. We need human interaction to survive. Imposed total isolation is torture. This is scary because our whole culture here in the US is becoming more isolated despite social media and video gaming over the internet.

There was a recent study showing that the most depressed group in the United States is the twenty to twenty-nine year olds. Depression is on the rise in the US in all age groups. The reason for this young adult group to be the most depressed described by the study's authors was: "... a lack of community." They said, "There's a greater amount of time spent in front of screens and not in front of other people.

If you don't have a community to reach out to, then your hopelessness doesn't have any place to go."

We are created to share one another's burdens; to rejoice when one of us rejoices and weep when one of us weeps. We are not to give up on one another when there is a conflict or when they accidentally hurt us,

like breaking our leg during recess. (My friend Marcia reminded me at a high school class reunion a few years ago about how we broke her leg in fourth grade.) I still feel guilty even though she forgave me!

WE ARE LOVED AND FORGIVEN

Further along in Romans 8 the chapter ends with: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Despite all our conflicts and mistakes, fears and misguided deeds of the flesh, we can trust that we are loved and forgiven by our mysterious Triune God. We are created to be the body of Christ now on earth and to do God's work in the world on her behalf.

Let us do what we can to live more fully, love more deeply, and follow Christ more closely, trusting that nothing can separate us from God's love in this life and the life to come. Amen

Benediction:

The Take Time to be Holy hymn gives good advice to:

Take time to be Holy, speak oft with thy Lord.

Abide with Him always and feed on His word.

Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,

Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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