

This weekend we are celebrating the Most Holy Trinity. We do this every year on the first Sunday after Pentecost. Probably because the Trinity is fully revealed at Pentecost, so it makes sense that this would be the time to honor the One God in three Divine Persons. The Trinity is a tough subject to tackle so maybe it is best to try to understand it while we are still fresh from receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Personally, I'd probably work my way up to the Trinity a little more gradually, especially at a time when we are called to proclaim the gospel to a world that is increasingly unaware of even the most basic truths of Christianity.

Even in the scriptures, God takes his time to fully reveal himself as a Trinity. As Christians, we can see Trinitarian references in the Old Testament, but that wouldn't have been how ancient Jews and probably even modern Jews would understand those passages. From our point of view, one of the most famous glimpses of the Trinity in the Old Testament is the three visitors of Abraham and Sarah in the book of Genesis. This scene is depicted in an icon written by the Russian painter Andrei Rublev which you can see in front of the baptismal font. This icon is called "The Trinity," and it depicts the three visitors eating at Abraham's table, but Rublev also intentionally wrote it to depict the divine Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I'll come back to this icon later. But again...if and when we see the presence of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament, we are able to see it because our eyes have been opened to it by Christ. It isn't until Jesus comes along to explain the true nature of God that the Trinity--one God in three divine persons--is fully revealed. And even then, it would take a few centuries for the fathers of the Church to work out how the three persons relate to each other.

The point here is that when it comes to proclaiming the gospel anew, the Holy Trinity might not be the best place to start, although there is a way to kind of sneak it in. When we proclaim the gospel, we are telling God's story and the best way to tell a story is to start at the beginning. God is eternal. His story doesn't have a beginning or an end...but our part in God's story does have a beginning...and our story begins with creation.

There is a trinitarian aspect to creation. Look at the Nicene Creed. "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, **maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible...** I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, true God from true God... **THROUGH HIM ALL THINGS WERE MADE.** I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, **THE GIVER OF LIFE.**" We have been

praying this creed in different languages since 381 AD, and it tells us that all three persons of the trinity played a part in the creation of everything that exists.

That might be a little too deep to talk about with your agnostic buddy while out camping. If I were going to tell someone God's story, I'd still begin with creation but I'd focus on why God created anything and that creation is good.

Why did God create everything? Why is there something instead of nothing? This is the first question that the ancient church fathers would have asked while they were proclaiming the gospel. The best answer for this comes from just three words written by Saint John: God is Love. God exists as a relationship of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The love those persons share cannot be contained; it is overflowing. God created everything out of love in order to share his love with everything. And this includes each of us ... personally ... as individuals. We are not here by accident. God planned for each of us to be here and now and He loves each of us as if each of us is the only one in all of creation. Imagine if everyone living in despair could only hear and experience that message. God is love and he loves you. God created everything out of love so that he could share his love with everything. And this includes each one of us...personally...as individuals. We are not here by accident. God planned for each one of us to be right here and right now and he loves each one of us as if each one of us were the only thing in all of creation. Imagine if all of those living in despair could only hear and experience that message. God is love and he loves you.

The scriptures also tell us that God said that everything he created was good. Again a powerful message for those living in despair or consumed with shame and guilt. Imagine being that person and hearing God say, "you may have done some bad things, but I created you and I love you. You...are...good. Come back to me, I will forgive you and we can start over again." That is what the sacrament of reconciliation is all about.

So...In telling God's story, I would start with creation. Why is there something instead of nothing? God created us and called everything he made good because he loves us and he wants us here. Then I would answer the question that would probably follow: "If God called all things good, then why are things so messed up? What happened?"

What happened is that one of those good creatures, Lucifer, the angel of light, became jealous and wanted power and turned away from God. Now we call him Satan. Satan knows he cannot defeat God so instead he attacks those whom

God loves. He attacks us. He wants to destroy us and all the good things that God created. Things are messed up because we have been captured and are held in bondage to sin.

And this is where Rublev's icon of the Trinity comes back in. There is an interpretation of the icon that goes something like this. The three persons of the Trinity are gathered together looking over what they have created. The Father sees that Adam and Eve have fallen into sin and have been captured by the enemy. He looks at the Son and the Holy Spirit and says: "Adam and Eve are lost. Who will go and get them? Who will bring them back? Who will bring them home?" The Son is looking at the Father and he says, "I will go get them. I will bring them back. I will bring them home." The Holy Spirit is sadly looking down...because he knows the price that the Son will have to pay.

Why is there something instead of nothing? Because God created everything and called it good. Why are things so messed up? Because we have been captured and the enemy is holding the world hostage. Those are the first two points in the proclamation of the gospel. The third is this: What, if anything, has God done about it? The answer...for next time...is that God has a rescue plan. He wants his world back. He wants us back...and Jesus is coming to get us.