

HOMILY - TRINITY SUNDAY YEAR C

“God is Family”

(Proverbs 8:22-31; Psalm 8; Romans :1-5; John 16:12-15)

An elder came to a missionary in China one day to say that he had no trouble understanding God the Father, and no trouble understanding God the Son, but that he was having a hard time understanding the “Honourable Bird!”

What is your image of God?

We believe that God is family, experienced through family and community

Some years back I was visiting a friend when his fifteen year old daughter came back from a soccer tournament. She burst into the house, dropped her bag on the floor, flopped on her dad’s lap, put her arm around his neck, and nestled her head against his for at least a minute, soaking up his love. He carried on with our conversation as if this was totally normal and expected. The other kids did not even notice, and his wife carried on preparing supper. This *was* normal in this household. I caught my breath and observed with awe this intimate father-daughter relationship. This might be as close to a picture of heaven as I will see on this earth, I thought to myself, and felt so grateful for what I was seeing.

The gospel of John on the Paraclete offers us a unique teaching. The Ascension of Jesus was a crisis of faith for the disciples. Was it the end or a beginning? John is not interested in enumerating the gifts of the Spirit, or how the Spirit directs the events of early Church, nor role of Spirit in baptism. John highlights two aspects only: the Spirit as the Presence of the Risen Jesus in the community, and the Spirit as Teacher and Witness to the Risen Jesus.

Simply put, the Spirit continues the work of Jesus, glorifying the Father and making the Father known. Jesus will forever be present within the Church through the Spirit. The Paraclete will thus proclaim the teachings of Jesus to them in the new and changing circumstances of their lives. And one of the most basic teachings of our faith is that God is family, relationship, Holy Trinity.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, has a powerful description of the working of the Holy Trinity in our lives. We believe that God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us by Jesus. This is all free grace in which we stand. That grace fills us with the peace of Christ, and a deep hope and faith that we will share in the glory of God that Jesus is enjoying even now. That hope is so strong that we can even boast of our struggles and suffering, which only makes us even stronger in this faith that justifies us. May our faith in this Trinitarian God be as strong as that of St. Paul.

Years ago there were many Search weekends in the diocese. One of the activities the youth did in groups or families was to act out their images of God. This was always a challenging and interesting time as the kids acted out “God is love, good, healer, almighty” – many different attributes of God. I noticed, however, that “God is Family” rarely was portrayed. I am not sure why or why not, but I

know that our input into the weekend always stressed that truth, and tried to live it out. We had the families come Sunday morning for a session with one of the kids giving a talk on what it was like to return home after a Search weekend. They saw slides the kids had put together on Church, and read a letter their young person had written to them. Then they came to the Breakthrough, the closing mass, to be reunited with their young person. Their presence was kept a surprise. Perhaps the most powerful moment of the weekend was the healing of relationships of teenagers with their parents. God as family was alive and well during these weekends.

The Eucharist we celebrate now is our family prayer and family meal where we sit down with our God who is family – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through this mystery we are forgiven, nourished, healed and sent out as a faith family to spread this Good News to all.

So, experience God through your family, and the family of the Church.