

## “God is for us”

06/11/17, TRINITY SUNDAY

Fr. Jim Plough

Though each stands by itself, the three Sundays surrounding us have a common theme. Pentecost last Sunday, the Blessed Trinity today, and the Body of Christ next Sunday. All deal with the presence of God.

Pentecost deals with the very breath of God, his life-giving Spirit breathing life into the world; Corpus Christi speaks of the way in which God nourishes us with his own Body and Blood; Trinity assures us that God is for us. Today we will deal only with the meaning-filled expression: “God is for us.”

Long ago, the second-century theologian, St. Irenaeus, sought to express his notion of God as Trinity by saying that the Son and the Spirit are like the two hands of God. God embraces us with Son and Spirit. I could imagine the image as that of God leaning forward and stretching his two hands outward. They would meet in front of him with his arms forming a circular shape as if closing a net. This would be the one hand, the Son, and the other hand, the Spirit, working in creation. If we consider ourselves within that embrace, we might easily describe God as the one who gives us a divine hug. To say that God is for us, in popular form, is to say that God loves to give us a hug, a divine embrace. God’s saving act of creating, sustaining, and saving all of creation is one cosmic act of the Trinity. God is not some distant clock-maker or disinterested deity; he is present as a deeply relational and personal Creator.

Celebrating the Feast of the Blessed Trinity is one way of speaking of how God is present in creation, God who gives us a hug. Pentecost speaks of God’s presence as Spirit, Corpus Christi, as nourishment, Trinity as embrace. Today’s Scriptures bolster the image of God as embracing us.

In Exodus, our first reading, God encounters Moses, not as a distant thunder in the sky, but walking with him and proclaiming God’s own name: “The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity (Exodus 34: 4-9).” God is not distant, but one who is deeply concerned about humanity and all of creation, a God who is for

us and a God who will be there for us. Moses acknowledges that his people have failed to understand what it means to profess faith, hope, and trust in such a God who is not distant, but journeys with his people, one who “comes along” in their company.

Our gospel presents yet another summary of the truth of Trinitarian faith: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son (John 3:16). God divested himself in order to be one with his people, to convince them that he wanted the world to be saved, not condemned. The ancient promise that God would be always for us comes to the highest expression in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. John’s gospel says if you want to know what God is like, look at his son, who is one hand of God active and present to all of humanity and creation.

Enter the second hand of God. The Holy Spirit is the other assurance of God’s immanence in and throughout creation, because the spirit is God. The Spirit is the one that maintains communion, that is the continued creative presence of God in the world, that we worship as the Lord and giver of life. The Spirit is the second hand of God that reaches out in the single Divine Act of creation and salvation. The Spirit is the one who will guide us back to the Creator.

Only if we come to understand that this is what the Trinity is about can we embrace the blessing that St. Paul gives us in the second reading: “Brothers and sisters, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you ( 2 Corinthians 13 11-13).” Will you let God give you a hug today?

( Fr. Dan Horan provided the basis of my homily with the image of two hands of God and its meaning in a Trinitarian context. )