

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts
Trinity Year C

We welcome everyone on this our Feast Day! Members and long time friends of Trinity we especially welcome you. Trinity Church has had a long history in Janesville. A part of that history as many know was in 1919 when two churches, Christ Church and Trinity Church united and came together under one roof. How do you merge two very different congregations, from two different socio-economic classes of people? That story is the work of God transforming, tearing down barriers, building a body for himself not made with hands. It is very long and hard work. Having the same building does not produce unity. Trinity's history proves it.

So on this feast day we honor the three persons of God found in unity, revealed in his diversity, teaching this church about what it means to be family. We believe this unity of God to be likened to a triangle equal on all sides with the Father as the head of the triangle.

We read particularly in the New Testament of that triangular relationship of divine community. In that relationship of Being, God teaches us to speak whatever we hear him say, as the Spirit teaches us. With that model we endeavor to speak the truth in love without judgment. Judgment kills love. That's why the wrong message empties our churches and exhausts shrinking congregations. We must learn as the Dean and President of Trinity Seminary has written, that "Love births Goodness." True "Goodness," he says, is never created or engendered by means of pressure, of any kind to any degree. Only One-Way Love (i.e. Grace) births goodness...Love creates a heart that wants to love back, and love out, and love up, and also love down."

Looking at Trinity's history, the church has not always loved in this way. Trinity, I am told, after its merger of its sister congregation, could visibly be seen to have one congregation sitting on the left side of the building and the other on the right. That veil drawn between its rows of pews has since continued to haunt this church. Our Bishop Steven Miller, continues to mention this in our discussions. The veil may no longer be one of economic class. The veil I believe is one of ownership. And the question that begs a response is, "Whose church is it anyway!?" Is this a church of one class over another? IS THIS NOT THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST?!

Our Lord in today's gospel ironically declares, "ALL THAT THE FATHER HAS IS MINE." If ownership is shared in the very Godhead we worship how is it that we find it so difficult to celebrate the gifts of all of God's people? The Spirit that gives us birth as Christians is the same Spirit that gave gifts to all. "Judgment kills love" and the Spirit. "Love births Goodness" and healing of a people. The church would no more be complete without all of God's people exercising their gifts than it would be to talk of God's nature without talking about the Holy Spirit.

The placement of Trinity Sunday after the Day of Pentecost is inspired by the vision of God's throne. In Isaiah's vision all his senses are overwhelmed by the sight, sound, smell, taste and touch of God's presence. Despite his calling as God's prophet he must first be purged of his sin and guilt before he can be sent out on the heavenly mission. The threefold cry of "Holy" suggests that the throne God is above and beyond that of any human king that Isaiah would serve. That heavenly vision burned into Isaiah's soul reminds him of his place, the true King he serves and the people of unclean lips to whom he is sent.

The second vision we heard read today gives us a view of God on his throne with the elders in worship around him. Again, sights, sounds and smells fill the vision of the heavenly majesty of the Almighty who transcends history. The threefold "Holy" again suggests that God is above all kingdoms, he is above all beasts of strength, beasts of burden, beasts of royalty and the cleverest human made in God's image. The chorus is singing, "You are worthy, our Lord and God..."

On Trinity Sunday, the door of heaven is opened and we are permitted a glimpse of God's glory. All human experience pales to what awaits those who love God. In the end all the golden crowns of the church, all labor and all the glory of humanity is subsumed to the One who sits high and lofty. It puts what we do here with in the church in perspective. Everything points to him who became flesh to unite us and make us one with the Father as he and the Spirit are one.

Those of you who care or know this church and her history are here today. You are here despite the big warts of our past and their ugly scars. God is still working to turn these warts into "beauty marks." Within this community, God can show both almighty power and suffering love, he can reveal his grace and truth in Jesus Christ,

and he can offer inspiration and new life in the person of the Holy Spirit. But first we must go to the throne of grace and seek forgiveness of any we have turned away. We must open the mouth of unclean lips, confessing our sins and making amends to those that are different from us. We must admit our denial of God's transcendence that draws us to the cross of Jesus Christ that we might become transformed into better human beings.

For this to happen we must expand our vision of God. We need to have an other-worldly experience of God, one that may be baffling but blessed, perplexing but powerful.

This view of God also expands our understanding of what it means to be the church today. Yesterday's view and understanding are not working very well for this church. If God himself is a community, united in mutual love and shared purpose, then we can be a close-knit and cohesive community as well. If God's community is creative, then ours should be, too. If his community is full of grace and truth, then these are qualities that we should show. If his community offers inspiration and liberation and transformation, then we should do no less.

When we enter God's presence, we not only experience a community of persons, but we also encounter a God of grace. It's a multi-sensory journey to spiritual wholeness. When we see God, we cannot help but see our destiny. In our cry for deliverance, a God of grace touches our hearts with coals of love and forgiveness and we're never the same.

Let us open wide our hearts for the burning coal of God's mercy. With the experience of forgiveness and a fresh vision we can serve Him with all His people and all the gifts His Spirit has given for the building up of Christ's Church. Amen.