

TRINITY SUNDAY (Year B; RCL)  
Saint Paul's Cathedral, San Diego; June 7, 2009  
Scott Richardson +

*In the Name of God; Earth-Maker, Pain-Bearer, Life-Giver. Amen.*

Today is Trinity Sunday, our annual celebration of God's self-revelation. We today affirm that God chooses to be seen. We know that the Second Person is seen most directly in the one we call Jesus. But the First and Third Persons are seen as well; in the creation, for instance, and in the formation of the church, to name just two obvious locations. The tangible manifestation of God in the visible world is the most significant part of what we gratefully claim and rejoice in today.

And, as Trinitarian Christians, that reality determines and directs our shared vocation. We are to make God visible and real for other people through word and deed. Today I'd like to tell you how some at Saint Paul's are going about that in three different areas of our life, all of them related to the godly work of peace and justice. These, by the way, are but three pages of an entire album of good deeds, all of them worthy of tribute.

I should mention at the outset that all three of these ministries directly track the work of our Triune God. The first area of witness that I'll hold up for you this morning honors God the Father, the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth. A wonderful group of earnest people have organized themselves in the past year to call us all to simpler and sustainable living practices. They're concerned with creation care, hyper-consumerism, and the global wealth gap. We all know the litany of associated issues – water purity, energy conservation, food security, air quality, eco-friendly trash disposal, greenhouse gas emissions. We also know that the time has come (in fact, it is past due) to alter the way we live, even in small ways, to try to safeguard the planet and all the people and creatures living upon and within it.

I'm especially intrigued by one radical notion wherein some gallant souls attempt to reduce their entire collection of worldly possessions to fewer than one hundred items. There was actually a time in my life when, motivated by God and poverty, I could have claimed success in that regard. I don't aspire to that now but I'm still taken with the delightful insanity of the idea and with the spiritual intent underlying it. The Buddha taught that ignorant craving is the root of all suffering; it's good to be reminded of that from time-to-time. I'm grateful to our Simpler Living crew for their persistent witness and for the forums they're offering this month.

The second ministry that I hold up for you today honors God the Son, especially as it emulates the social practices of Jesus of Nazareth. I'm referring now to our

cathedral spirit of inclusion. When we use that word people often think of our welcoming the lgbt community to the cathedral, making the cathedral a safe place where, in the words of Bishop Chane, all are protected from the ravages of religious bigotry. Supporting the lgbt community in their struggle for equality (church and state) is indeed an important aspect of our ministry, but the word inclusion actually means much more than that.

I was talking with some friends earlier this week and we reflected together on the way that Jesus readily engaged every human being who sought to engage him. They might be Pharisees like Nicodemus in today's gospel, or Roman centurions, tax-collectors, prostitutes, or common folk – the people of the earth. It didn't matter. Jesus, in contrast to the religiously pure of his day, did not have screens or filters in place when others approached him. He was open to each and every person who wanted to know more about living within the Kingdom that he both described and embodied.

Following his lead, we too hope to engage the whole human family, especially as they're curious about the gospel we've received and proclaim, if they too desire to be as open to their neighbor as our Lord was. I'll never forget an observation that a wise parishioner made after a Sunday service. He saw a gay man sitting next to a homeless woman who was sitting next to the quarterback of the San Diego Chargers. That, our friend said, was a glimpse into the Kingdom for him. For me, too. That's what we mean by inclusion.

Moving on now to our final point of focus this morning and to a ministry that celebrates the Pentecost energy of the Holy Spirit. Recall our first reading from last week: Jesus ascends to heaven and the Holy Spirit descends mightily on his followers. They are instantly given new linguistic and social abilities that allow them to transcend barriers and borders in the service of the gospel. The ministry of Saint Paul's Cathedral, like all ministries, occurs within a geographical and social location. Our location happens to be a few miles from an international border, a line separating relatively affluent people from relatively impoverished people – most of them sisters and brothers in Christ. As people committed to the vows and values of baptism we strive to helpfully and mutually engage our near neighbors.

Your Canon for Hispanic Ministry, for instance, leads a Spanish-speaking congregation of 75 people and, when not here, serves as a chaplain to young children who've been arrested for being undocumented. These are children who have come to the U.S. from all over the world except for Mexico; due to our proximity to the border, Mexican children are deported immediately. The others might be from Nicaragua or El Salvador or Guatemala or Panama or the Ukraine or China. Some of them are as young as six-years old. They await their deportation hearing; that wait can last as long as six months. They are held in a detention facility that more resembles a dormitory. Her ministry there – celebrating the Eucharist, bringing the Guadalupe Art Program, offering pastoral

care and motherly comfort, reveals the hopeful and healing work of the Holy Spirit.

In like manner, our Associate for Peace and Justice Ministries spent many a Sunday afternoon at Border State Park this year, bearing witness to the crucial importance of a small space at the border fence where families from both sides used to meet to talk, share, pray, touch, and love one another directly. That portion of the park has been demolished so that more fences can be put in place. But, due to the witness of border advocates, that decision is now being reviewed. Praise God.

Finally, many of you are aware of our ministry to children of the incarcerated at Dorcas House, our foster home for forty kids in Tijuana. I'll have more to say about that in a couple of weeks but, for now, let's mark that this is one of the primary ways we show the love of God in the world and at the border. The next trip down, by the way, is scheduled for June 20<sup>th</sup>.

So that's how some at Saint Paul's are trying to manifest our Triune God in the world these days. Here now is the key to understanding Trinity Sunday – we would know nothing about God if God did not choose to be revealed. The gap between God's identity and our awareness is too great. In the same way, others may know nothing of God if we don't try to manifest God in plain speech and common action.

However you do it, your task in life is to make God known in the world – to be a care-giver, a gracious lover of souls, a welcoming presence, a border angel, an eco-hero, the incarnation of kindness, justice, and wisdom, a gentle truth-teller, a creating, redeeming, inspiring presence.

Now that's a long list – many of you are already doing many of those things. Perhaps it would be enough if we all took just one more step forward for the love of God; Earth-Maker, Pain-Bearer, Life-Giver. Amen.