

Sermon, 3 June 2007—Trinity Sunday with baptism

Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Revelation 4:1-11; John 16:5-15

This is Trinity Sunday, our first milestone along the great highway of Pentecost, which we will ride along until Advent. Today we also joyfully bring into the household of faith Brynn Rosella Zabloski. The liturgy of baptism is its own sermon, so I will speak briefly. We are confronted with two mysteries today: divine life and human life. At baptism, we bring the two together. We place the person being baptized into the life of God.

The Trinity is God as God is revealed to us in Scripture. The deep Source of all things has a Word that creates and restores and sanctifies us, and that Word becomes effective and active by means of the Holy Spirit. What Scripture calls the Son is God in a form accessible to human beings; and what Scripture calls the Spirit is God ensuring that the transmission is faithfully received. The Spirit is active so that we can know Christ, who was given to us so that we can know what Scripture calls the Father.

The Trinity is simply our way of depicting what we know must be true about God. Even though we know that all things proceed from God, the Creator, we ourselves do not start there. We were not present at Creation, neither the creation of the cosmos nor the creation of our self. We start from our own restlessness.

That curious itch that “there must be more to life than this” is the breath of the Holy Spirit. Always, whether we are aware of it or not, the Spirit is the first knowledge we have of God, because the Spirit is that which activates and connects. My sense of awe, of gratitude, of compassion, every sense that moves me beyond myself with hope, with desire, with confidence, is the activity of the Spirit. Before I even know Jesus, let alone the depths of

God, the Spirit is already stirring in me, causing me to long for meaning in my life, for beauty, for trustworthy relationships with others. Remember that the Spirit descended on Jesus at baptism and empowered his ministry, giving him purpose and the ability to connect with others and to act in order to heal and strengthen and forgive and encourage them. Remember that the Spirit descended on Jesus' followers at Pentecost and empowered their ministry, making it possible for them to continue the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins that had been Jesus' exclusive gift before, and making it possible for those that heard them to understand that God was present and active. The Spirit is always about those moments when we realize that "there is more to this than meets the eye;" and the Spirit is what makes it possible for us to connect with that "more."

Of course, the Spirit is what makes it possible for us to recognize in Jesus a way of life that gives meaning to life because it is the life God lived as a human being. In Jesus, the way things are from God's perspective was made known to us as one of us. Beyond any expectation, beyond any plausibility, the Creator of all things wanted to be known by the creatures created, and when the Creator was known, what we met was love and compassion, not as a technique or a teaching, but as a person, as one of us. This is stupefying and unlikely: we know God as a Jewish carpenter, who became a wanderer because he had gifts of healing and unfathomable depths of trust in God, and who because he trusted God, welcomed everyone, and who because he welcomed everyone, became hated by those for whom distinctions and discriminations and hierarchies and power mattered, and who absorbed that hatred even to death, but who was brought back to life. But if we long for something greater than ourselves to be known to us, what besides this example of courage and compassion could have worked for us?

And, of course, what the Incarnate Word makes possible for us to recognize is that a life lived out of unfathomable depths of trust in God is available to us. When we call God “Father”—or “Mother” or “Abba” or any other term for the source of our life—we are doing what Jesus showed us how to do. He is called the “Son” because he was a Jewish man who called God “Father.” God doesn’t need awesome names; God can be called what we call a parent, who conceived and bore and nurtured us. God is not fearful, remote, abstract; God is what gives us life. This root of generativity is what we want to be in relationship with. That is what will give us hope and joy and courage and peace. If what constantly creates and sustains and blesses all things—this abyss of life—is what I am in constant relationship with, then I know eternal life. Jesus is the One who shows us the Way, and the Holy Spirit is the One who empowers us to walk that Way, but the Way is this pilgrimage we make to abide forever in the One that gives us life.

Today, Brynn Rosella Zabloski is rooted in that life. Her parents and godparents are already, by their actions, affirming that there is more to life than meets the eye. They are making it possible today for Brynn to join us in our pilgrimage towards the fullest possible life. Brynn herself teaches us by showing us what it is to trust those who love her before she even knows how to reflect on love; we, when we are brought into the presence of God, are always exactly where Brynn is today—we trust before we understand; we must be loved before we can love; we do not know how badly we need to be rooted in God. We teach her and her family as we confess our faith, and pledge ourselves in the Baptismal Covenant to certain godlike principles of behavior, and demonstrate how to welcome each other and to praise the One Holy and Undivided Trinity. May we endure in that praise and plunge ever more deeply into the life of the threefold God this day and forever.