

8:00 a.m. only

“Some things have to be believed to be seen.” Not seeing is believing, but the opposite. “Some things have to be believed to be seen.” The English poet, Ralph Hodgson, said this, and I think he must have been an Anglican, or at least have acknowledged the Triune God of Christianity, because this is exactly the case for us who claim the Trinity: you have to believe it in order to see it.

The concept of Trinity began as an experience. It was because the early Christians had experienced God as creator and the Son as redeemer, and this curious, invisible entity we call the Spirit as the spark of life, that they began to try to explain it and to codify it into a doctrine of the Church.

It took about three centuries. The Nicene Creed, which we will say together shortly, declares the Trinity of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but that creed, established at the Council of Nicea in 325, was controversial and the subject of fierce debate for another 150 years afterward. Volumes were written about the topic and still are.

Yet the importance of the Trinity for our lives is not in mastery of its meaning, but in our willingness to enter into the mystery of God through the ideas and images of the Trinity. Mystery is what we're after, not mastery.

We're not awfully good at entering into mystery, most of us. We like explanations, proofs, demonstrations we can see and understand. But where God is concerned, “Some things have to be believed to be seen.”

Thinking of God as three in one, even though we can't possibly explain it, tells us a few things. First, God is not monolithic, not static, not rigid. God is not alone and doesn't act alone. God is a community and acts as a model for us as to what community should be.

There is a concept of this community which is part of the mystery of the Trinity. It's called *Perichoresis*, a Greek word meaning literally “dance around” - “peri” – around and “choresis” - to dance.

I find that the imagery of the Trinity dancing around enriches the idea of three in one. In this dance there is no leader. God the father does not dominate the Son or the Spirit, but all three are equal partners. They weave in and out and around one another, dancing, turning, filled with joy. They are in intimate relationship with each other, but each is needed, all are equal, and each gives to the other two.

There is no selfishness in this community. The three are distinct in what each contributes to the others but they are truly one.

Jesus refers to *perichoresis* when, in today's gospel reading, he says to the disciples, "all that the Father has is mine." He says the Spirit will come to them and the Spirit will "take what is mine and declare it to you." And so Jesus invites all of us into the dance of the Trinity as well. As Jesus dwells in God he also dwells in us, that we may all be one.

We are some distance from building communities that dance like this. Dominance and inequality are clearly the way of the world, the way to get ahead. But the Trinity remains our model. That's why the Church is, at its best, so counter-cultural. Our model for living together is entirely different from the model of secular society. Our model is based in the Trinity's self-giving love.

And if it is true that "Some things have to be believed to be seen," then we are called by our believing to be seen as a model of community for all who are willing to look.

We are charged as Christians to make the love of God visible to all humankind. And with the working of the Holy Spirit, the world may learn from our example.
Thanks be to God.

Soli Deo Gloria