



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Trinity Sunday, June 3rd, 2012

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

Trinity Sunday is always a bit of a challenge. It is not particularly easy to preach a sermon on the infinitely complicated nature of God's domestic arrangements. And how else can you describe the concept of three divine persons sharing one divine nature other than "infinitely complicated."

The notion is so complicated, in fact, that throughout all ages folks have had great difficulty coming to terms with the reality of the Trinity. Indeed, it is so difficult to understand that some people have even gone so far as to claim the idea is simply the invention of Fourth Century Christians.

But that's not true at all. Not by a long chalk. Read your Bibles and you'll discover the Holy Trinity there in the first three verses of Genesis, the very first book of the Bible.

I quote: "In the beginning God [*the Father*] created the heaven and earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God [*the Holy Ghost*] moved upon

the face of the waters. And God said, [*the Son, Jesus Christ, the divine Word, the Logos in Greek*] Let there be light: and there was light."

St. John put it this way in the first verse of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The only conclusion to draw from this is that the Trinity is right at the heart of everything.

Some of the newer translations of the Bible do not make this entirely clear. The translators of the New English Bible, for example, saw fit to cut the Holy Ghost out of the act in Genesis altogether. They render the words "the Spirit of God" as "the wind" – as in "And a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters."

But that's not what the Hebrew says. The Hebrew reads: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." And it is rendered in this fashion not only in both 16th Century English and German, but in 3rd Century BC Greek, not to omit First century AD Latin, Syriac (Aramaic), and Coptic –

the four languages into which the most ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible were transcribed.

This gives you an indication of the serious nature of liberties modern translators take with the text of God's Holy Word – liberties that help explain why cutting edge theologians claim Jesus didn't teach the doctrine of the Trinity, but rather that it was invented by early gentile theologians, who had been "tainted" with Greek religious ideas.

Actually, there's nothing uniquely modern about people denying the Trinity. The notion is so complicated that throughout all ages even devout Christians have had difficulty coming to terms with the reality of the Trinity. Indeed, here in America the 18th Century gave birth to a sect that rejected the Trinity in its entirety. They are still around. They call themselves Unitarians.

But, truth to tell, denying the Trinity is more than a little old fashioned and outmoded. We, who live in the second decade of the 21st Century, are much better equipped than previous generations to comprehend the concept a Trinitarian being and to grasp Aristotle's assertion that God's nature is likely to be very different from our own.

Most of us today are more familiar with scientific concepts than our forebears – if only through the medium of science fiction. But this makes it much easier for us to envisage life forms that are radically different from our own.

We can concede the possibility, for example, that while life on earth is carbon-based, life forms based on other compounds are

possible: silicon, for instance. And just as we can conceive of non-carbon-based life forms, so we can also grasp the concept of three divine persons sharing one divine nature.

There is, however, a vast difference being coming to terms with the concept of a trinitarian life form and actually gaining an inkling of what it must be like to share something as intimate as one's own nature with two other people. It's far more intimate, for example, than sharing an apartment or a breakfast table. In fact, the nearest we can come to it is Christian marriage.

Marriage is the oldest of the sacraments. The Book of Genesis tells us that in marriage, a man and a woman become – in a mystical, but no less real sense " – one flesh." And St. Paul tells us that marriage in making us "one flesh" reflects the mystical union between Christ and his Church.

This is an extraordinary statement. It means nothing less that the fact that it is in marriage human beings come closest to reflecting the nature God. For it is only in marriage that we can approach experiencing the bonds of altruistic love that bind together the three persons of Holy and Undivided Trinity.

In a very real sense, Christian marriage is like being born anew. In marriage, Christian husbands and wives can no longer to think of themselves in the first person singular. For them, the solitary letter "I" is replaced by the word "we." And in them, together with their children, we see an icon, a reflection – however imperfect – of the Holy, Blessed and Undivided Trinity.
AMEN