

Sunday Missive -- June 7, 2020



Trinity Sunday

Andrei Rublev -- Russian (c.1365–c.1430), Only a single work is credited to him with any certainty: the reknowned *Old Testament Trinity* depicting the three angels who visit Abraham in The Book of Genesis, Chapter 18.

Blessed be God, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier
And blessed be God's kingdom, now and forever. Amen

Hymn 398

I sing the almighty power of God, that made the mountains rise,
That spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at God's command, and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord, that filled the earth with food;
Who formed the creatures with a Word, and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how thy wonders are displayed, where'er I turn my eye,
If I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky!

There's not a plant or flower below, but makes thy glories known,
And clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from thy throne;
While all that borrows life from thee is ever in thy care,
And everywhere that I could be, thou, God, art present there.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocpVKgQyPKA>

A Reading from The Book of Genesis – Chapter 1

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

It doesn't take a forensic psychologist or any other student of cognitive intelligence to see that this is a story with two subjects but from one point of view. On the one hand, we have a prehistoric narrative that explicates the beginnings of the human species. Nowadays we know that humankind is not the only thing made in the image and likeness of God; all of Creation reflects the Creator, who cannot possibly have a gender. And we acknowledge that human dominion proceeded at what we would call an extremely low pace during this epoch. It is only lately that we have become fully dominant, which is to say, fully capable of destroying all things. All things that live, anyway. But when the narrative was first conveyed, it was to answer the question: How did we get so smart? How come we the bosses of everything? (See Psalm 8, below.)

The other subject is one of rationalization. With the dawn of human consciousness came a hunger for connection with powers greater than ourselves. If these powers were to allow us approach them, we divined that we must follow certain rules. Different traditions have posited different sets of rules, but the underlying goal of all of them is to tell us how to be good in the eyes of cosmic powers. The Ten Commandments are the set of rules most familiar to most of us who read this missive. They comprise a short

and direct list of ways to behave towards God and ways not to behave towards the rest of Creation.

Human beings, however, vacillate wildly in our desires. One minute we want to align ourselves with the One who made the mountains rise and be good enough to call ourselves godly. The next instant we want to enslave somebody to level some mountain for us so we can use the rocks to fuel our habits and the land to build our cities on -- and tough beans about whatever is living on the mountain when we do. But we still want to feel good and godly whilst we do it – or at least soon afterwards. So we have a narrative that tells us that before rules were given, the overall rule was already in place: “Fill the Earth and subdue it. And have dominion over every living thing that moves.” That’s the preface to the Ten Commandments.

God has continued to speak to us. Whether or not you are even a religious person, you know this. We know more about the dichotomies between human oppression and human rights, between taking care of the planet and destroying it, between justice and disparity than we did even fifty years ago... or last week. Prophets and Philosophers of every stripe and culture have called upon their listeners to accept that goodness and godliness must entail justice, mercy and humility. The truth is clear, and no amount of advertising and harangue will convince us otherwise.

But Oh! how fervently, brutally and desperately our cultures cling to that earlier rationale: ‘God told us to subdue and dominate,’ and its handy cognate, ‘The ends justify the means.’ And so in the echo chambers of our hearts, in the conversations of our communities and in the machinations of the peoples, again and again, in small ways and terrifyingly big ones, the clear truths we have discovered about what any God there is wants from us – truths that seem self-evident –are set aside, ignored, or outright disdained when those truths seem to undermine our subduings and dominions. These pernicious underminings can take many forms, all of which defund – spiritually, economically, emotionally, our self-image as First among not-always-equals and worthy of more power, wealth and authority than others.

Hymn 362

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gep0009l8mc>

This Trinity Sunday, we can surely embrace the mysterious truth that even God is in community, and we must also be if we are to know peace.

“God laughed and the son came into being; the two of them laughed and thereby the spirit was made manifest; the three of them laughed and humanity was born.” Meister Eckhardt 14thc

“It’s all about community. Every community has three, even the smallest one, in your own head. That would be: what you want, what others want from you, and the desire you have to reconcile the two. Or, as St. Augustine (4thc) put it, “Whenever there is an occurrence of love, there are three entities: the lover, the beloved and the love itself.”

At a certain point we realize that, although this conception of Trinity, or more accurately, this attempt at a characterization of God with three entities in one identity is mysterious -- even kaleidoscopic -- it is also meet and right. Right because it acknowledges -- celebrates -- the deepest truth: no one can define God. And meet because it bears witness to our experience of life. God is in everyone or in noone. We are completely in our communities -- one way or another and with benevolence -- or we are utterly alone. And as we are the Body of Christ, one of our communities is the Trinity.

As we reflect on the ongoing revelation that humanity is offered – by prophetic and faithful witness and by horrific hard-way lessons, surely we must realize that any community that perpetuates injustice must surely fail. And we cannot escape the clear truth that racial disparities in any area of our common life are injustice. As David J. Lose writes, “The very heart of the evil and power of racism is that it makes it painfully difficult for us to see the ‘likeness of God’ in those who differ from us. Racism, at its heart, takes someone who should be intimately recognizable to us – one also created in the image of God and so a fellow child of God – into someone or, really, something other than us, someone or thing we need not recognize as bearing the same dignity and rights that we take for granted.”

Psalm 8

How majestic is your name through all the **earth***
Your majesty is set above the **heavens**.

When I look upon the widest **heavens***
The moon and the stars which you **arranged**.

What are we that you should keep us in **mind**?*
Mere humanity, that you should **care**?

Yet you have made us little lower than **angels***
With glory and honor you **crowned us**.

You let us have power over the works of your **hands***
You put all things under our **feet**.

All of them, the sheep and the **oxen***
Yes, even the cattle of the **fields**.

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew -- Chapter 28

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This has been called the “great promise.” God is with us, in our sadness and our mourning, in our protests and voting booths, in our fears and frustrations; our confessions and repentance. God is with us. And as long as we are part of that community, we will never lose hope nor give on this one.

Hymn 371

Thou, whose almighty word chaos and darkness heard, and took their flight
hear us, we humbly pray, and, where the Gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray, let there be light!

Thou who didst come to bring on thy redeeming wing healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind, sight to the inly blind,
now to all humankind, let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love, life-giving holy Dove, speed forth thy flight!
Move on the waters' face bearing the gifts of grace,
and, in earth's darkest place, let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three, glorious Trinity, wisdom, love, might;
boundless as ocean's tide, rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide, let there be light!

Westminster Abbey – Armistice Day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs255M8e77k>

“Finally, sisters and brothers, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (13th Chapter of Paul’s 2nd Letter to the Corinthians, Verse 11)

These words, whether we speak them together or apart, aloud or in our hearts, go with us as we face the challenges of the day and try to be good only by doing good – without rationalizations. May they give us strength and direction and faith sufficient to whatever lies before us.

Awe-Inspiring Gospel Music for Trinity Sunday

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGHA9a8xyIU>

About Our Planning Process

We still await sufficient assurances from the medical and scientific community that banding together in our sanctuary on Shasta Avenue would be anything but foolhardy and irresponsible. However, the prospect of seeing one another again is starting to become as foreseeable as it is desirable.

Each of you is invited to weigh in on these matters, if you haven't already. Our Vestry Members are calling around in hopes that you will express your desires and concerns, hopes and fears, suggestions and critique on the subject of our common life. If you do not get a phone call, please make one – to the Rector – or write him a note or an email. He will call or write back with a few points of inquiry for you to address!

Meanwhile, we remain gathered in spirit, singing in our places of shelter, staying informed and lifting our prayers and praises in the sure and certain hope that our life in and as the Body of Christ compels it. Please let Padre Sid know if you have needs that are not being met, or if you would just like to talk: (203) 209-2339 sssymington@gmail.com

Online Church Services

St. Benedict's, Los Osos:

8am on Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7977776046>

10:30 www.facebook.com/stbenslososos/live

The National Cathedral, Washington, DC

<https://cathedral.org/online/>

All Saints Church, Pasadena

<https://allsaints-pas.org/live-stream/>

Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Texas

<https://incarnation.org/digital-worship/>