

Trinity Sunday also Commitment Sunday
May 18, 2008
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Today is Trinity Sunday. There are many special days in the Christian calendar but only one associated with a classic doctrine of the church. Trinity Sunday is not a day to solve the mathematical problem of three persons equaling one God. While it might be helpful to explore the right analogy using that which we know - water can be ice, fluid or vapor - one substance in three different forms does not capture the intent of this observance. Trinity Sunday is a day to mediate and focus on the nature of God so we might come to reflect that nature in our own lives.

I know not everyone agrees with the intent of the creation story as recorded in Genesis. The highlight of this majestic poem is the creation of humankind in the image of God. "So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." God then placed humankind in a position of responsibility. In a real sense the creation continues to be fruitful and multiply because of the stewardship of human beings.

That responsibility to be stewards becomes all the more important for us here at St. John on this Pledge or Commitment Sunday. On this day the Stewardship Committee on behalf of the Vestry asks you and me to make a commitment out of our financial resources so we might continue our mission of sharing the good news of God in Jesus Christ by growing in spirituality, service and size.

Every day it seems I get another fund raising letter. The schools I attended have a student call and encourage me to give to their annual scholarship campaign. The heart association would like me to support the good work they are doing to end heart disease. The Farm and Land Trust needs my support to protect farmland in the area from being over developed.

The list can go on and on. As much as we might dislike these appeals to our generosity, we find many similar appeals in our Bible. Paul reminds the church in Corinth to be generous as the church in Macedonia had been with them. Throughout the Old and New Testament we find appeals to remember those in need and open our wallets to provide for those among us who

cannot provide for themselves. So, why do we struggle with this message? Why do we feel so put upon when the parish of which we are a part asks us to do our part to make possible the many ministries in which we participate?

The church provides the opportunity for us to be generous with the gifts God has provided so abundantly in blessing each of our lives. Our personal generosity is an expression of our faith and shared in grateful witness to God. How we live and what we believe is reflected in our expressions of generosity, be it sharing time, abilities or money.

Not too long ago there was a television commercial for some kind of potato chip, I think they were Pringles. Two Eskimos were sitting in the vast frozen, uninhabited wasteland. One is enjoying himself eating the contents of a Pringles can. The other looking on asks for one chip. The first man responds, "If I give you one I have to give one to everyone."

About the same time Doritos ran a commercial featuring Jay Leno as the spokesman. After telling us about the chips great flavor and crunch he adds, "Crunch all you want ... we'll make more." These commercials capture for me the reality of where most of us live as opposed to the Christian perspective of God's creation. We live in a place where we must take care of ourselves and hoard because one never knows what tomorrow brings. The Christian perspective is be generous and share - God will provide. We live in abundance if we just can open our eyes and see the goodness of the creation.

Matthew Dobyms shared a story from his workplace that captures how the myth of scarcity can be deadly for generosity. Matthew works at Starbucks.

On this particular day he was working the drive through window. "Your total is \$3.66 today," he said to the woman who pulled up to the window. The customer said she wanted to pay for the drink of the person in the car behind her because someone had done that for her last week and it made her day. As Matthew processed the transaction he thought what a generous way to make someone else's day.

The next car pulled up to the window. Matthew handed the customer her drink and told her the customer in front of her had already paid for it. The second customer was so overjoyed that someone would do that she handed her credit card to Matthew and said, "I want to pay for the drink of the person behind me. If I can pass on this feeling that someone gave me then I am going to do it."

As she moved away from the window, Matthew thought what a cool way to see people being generous toward people they have never met.

The next car pulled up and Matthew handed the customer a drink explaining that it had been paid for by the customer in the car that just pulled away. The customer took the drink, paused for a second and said, "Must be my lucky day." The customer drove off with the generosity of the previous two cars and never looked back to see who might benefit from generosity passed on.

Matthew reflected, "This entire interaction shows how ingrained in humanity the myth of scarcity really is. It seems to be the default setting in our society, generosity is offered to us but we do not think about extending generosity to another because there might not be enough for us later."

The Bible teaches that we worship not a God of scarcity but a God of abundance. The creation poem we heard read this morning is about the generosity of a God who created all that is and called it good. Our cup is not just full it is overflowing.

No where is the generosity of God more evident than in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul reminds us: "You know the generous act of Jesus Christ, who for our sakes became poor so that by his poverty we might become rich." Jesus lived and taught the life of abundance.

Jesus' first miracle was to supply good wine for a wedding feast. Jairus was a loving father who could not buy a cure for his daughter but Jesus in response to his need acted with generosity to restore his daughter to health. These stories do not guarantee that whenever we need good wine or a miracle cure, Jesus will provide it. These stories remind us of the generous nature of God. It is only when we remember that fact that generosity becomes possible at all for each of us.

When God becomes a focus in our lives we can claim the abundance with which we have been blessed. We can live in God's world where there is always more than we can desire or deserve. There is no room in God's kingdom for holding back.

God has entrusted us with this marvelous creation. Our skills, our love, our words, our time, our financial resources spent in service to God and others are a reflection of God's grace and abundance. May we give, and share, and love and trust in God who provides all we need and more.