

The Holy Trinity: The Force Field of Love Reading: Mt. 28:16-20 Trinity/A
By the Rev. Karen Faye Siegfriedt; Trinity Episcopal Church, Sutter Creek, CA 6-11-17

God is always bigger than we think! Unfortunately, most of us have put God into a small box as a way of trying to control the Divine force. A few days ago, I googled the word *God* and came up with over 1.8 billion entries. This included different names for God, definitions of God, and pictures of God. There were proofs that God does exist and proofs that God does not exist. You can now find God on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook although God has not posted any recent items on her Facebook page. There are a lot of stupid ways to think about God, and the web and media are full of them.

Is your God too small or distorted? If so, you are in the majority. Whether the smallness of your God is due to some early childhood notion, poor preaching, or ideas passed on from previous generations, these ideas about God are often insufficient, distorted, or bordering on fantasy and heresy. Unfortunately, these absurd notions of God are causing a lot of havoc in our world today. For instance, many folks understand God as a divine Santa Claus, waiting in residence to grant our every wish, especially when we are nice. These are the people who believe that God's sole purpose is to gratify their own ego desires. This results in a society full of narcissist and material consumerists.

Some people think of God as a Marquis de Sade: A dominant deity inflicting pain and suffering on human beings. This is a God who despises sin and sinners with such a passion that "he" will even arrange for their extermination. Then there is the Master of Ceremonies god. This is a popular one for those who are sentimental. If you are planning a wedding, a baptism, or a funeral but haven't stepped into a church in years, then this is the god for you. The god of ceremonies provides an illusion for that "special wedding day," especially for those who have no real religious convictions or spiritual motivation. This is a part-time god who takes off once the ritual is over.

Indeed, there are a lot of stupid ways to think about God. But what I want to focus on today is a smart way to think about God. I want to talk about the Trinity, the Force Field of divine love. The doctrine of the Trinity is important because how we conceptualize God has a lot to do with how we act in the world. If our God is too small, we will remain spiritually stagnant, perhaps even doing harm to ourselves or our neighbor. If our notion of God is distorted, we are apt to justify our prejudices and self-centered activities. There is still plenty of discrimination and killing going on in the name of God because of people's distorted ideas. If we think of God as some distant deity who created the world and then disappeared to leave us on our own, then we tend to live our lives as if God does not really exist. This is the distant God of the enlightenment, one that many liberal Christians embrace today.

Two thousand years ago, the Disciples of Christ began to recognize that God was bigger than what they had first imagined. In the person of Jesus, they saw a divine light and heard the word of God speaking. And while God had often spoken to them through the prophets, the scriptures, and in dreams, this was different because Jesus and God seemed to be unified in mind, spirit, and substance. When Jesus' physical presence departed from the earth, his Spirit, the Spirit of God, took up residence within them, leading them forward with courage into truth and harmony. And from these personal experiences of God, the doctrine of the Trinity began to develop over a period of three hundred years.

The Holy Trinity is not two men and a bird. The words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are an attempt to explain a God that is much bigger than we had once thought. When we say that God is three persons, we do not mean that God is a person like you and me. Rather we mean that God has three distinct centers of consciousness but all of the same divine substance. The early Christians experienced these three distinct centers of consciousness which deepened their spiritual lives & strengthened their hope for a transformed humanity.

For them, the Holy Trinity was a *force field of love* that gave them the wisdom and courage to go out into the world to spread Jesus' message of compassion. After Jesus' departure, it was this Holy Spirit, the spirit of Truth that propelled them out into the world in spite of all kinds of resistance as they baptized thousands of people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This spirit of God that

was in Jesus is the same spirit of God that is in each one of us. When our hearts are open to its direction, it leads us towards truth, generosity, compassion, justice, and peace, enabling us to grow into the likeness of Christ. Unfortunately, many people have built a wall around their hearts and minds, shutting out this Spirit of Truth from informing their lives. That is why ignorance persists, even among Christians.

I recently read an article about climate-change skeptic Tim Walberg, a U.S. congressman from Michigan. Speaking at a town hall, he told his constituents that if there's a real climate problem, "the only solution is a heavenly one." "Why do I believe that?" Walberg said. "Well, as a Christian, I believe that there is a creator God who is much bigger than us. And I'm confident that, if there's a real problem, he can take care of it."

While I do not know Walberg's full theological understanding of God, it seems as if he has a pagan god in mind, one who pulls the strings from the heavens to effect changes on earth. This kind of primitive thinking typically comes from an earlier stage of faith that is neither "Christian" nor "scriptural." It negates our responsibility to be good stewards of the earth and also negates our Trinitarian understanding of God. Any religious belief that explains away or attempts to dismiss our responsibility to take care of our planet's resources, water, air, and creatures is a direct affront to the God in whom we live and move and have our being. Because creation is a gift from God who deemed it "good," we have a moral obligation to stop treating it like a toilet. If we end up destroying our planet, it will be our fault, not God's.

The Trinity is a relationship of love, mutuality, and interpenetration between the Creator, the Word, and the Spirit: One God, one Light, three persons. And like a rainbow that reveals the colorful beauty of the distinct wavelengths found in white light, the Holy Trinity reveals its divinity in distinct and generous ways: creation, love, truth, and transformation. So how do we live in this flow of Love?

Richard Rohr suggests that the best way to live in the Trinitarian flow of love is to observe our own emotional life and get in touch with those old wounds and psychological blockages that prevent us from experiencing the Trinitarian force field of love: Try to feel the difference in your body, "when you are tight, emotionally stingy, constricted, and in a withholding state—and when you are "in the flow" without any holding back or reserve. If you cannot distinguish between these two inner states in your own self, you may be able to notice them in others. There are numerous nonverbal cues most of us learn to read very early. Even children can sense the difference between cold and warm people.

"The cold person lives from a place of scarcity, invariably protecting and defending what little they think they have or are. A person in the flow neither protects nor guards their inner source, vitality, or emotions—any more than necessary to maintain a needed sense of identity. You can tell when someone is in the flow, when they trust that their very life is given freely; you may see it in their smile. The natural flow of creative and generative love is largely impossible when we are "sucking in"—when we're stingy, petty, blaming, angry, playing the victim, or in any way offended. When we're recounting what people did to us or what they did not do for us, we're pulling back and sucking in. We need to notice when we're in this constrictive state right away before it takes hold of us."

Prayer, contemplation, forgiveness, self-awareness, service to others, and the desire "to be well," are spiritual practices that can bring us back into the force field of love. Once immersed in this force field of love, we begin to live in the Flow, thus becoming an open conduit for the gushing stream of abundant life that is our birthright.

+ May the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself rest upon each and every one of you! Amen.+

