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Trinity Sunday

*"No, My Phone is not God, but..."*

The Rev. Jeanette Repp  
St. Peter's, San Pedro

One of those things you never want to do is get into an argument with your hairdresser when she's cutting your hair. (And with short hair, I don't have a lot of room for an error!) A few years ago, when I was getting mine cut for Easter, I asked mine if she had plans for the holiday. Little did I know what I was in for!

You see, I'd forgotten that she is a Unitarian, and so what happened next was she started trying to get me to argue with her about Jesus' divinity and the trinity! Ouch! I'd been getting my hair cut by this woman for 10 years, and considered her a friend. And yet, I could tell from the tone of her voice she really didn't want to have a conversation. She was set on an argument about why she was right and I was wrong, and as importantly, my hair was in her hands!

Our belief in one God, and not many, is core to our faith. It is also important connection that we share with other faiths around the world - Judaism, Islam, and Unitarians. At a time with so much division in the world remembering this point of unity is especially important. Yet it is also important to consider what makes us different: what is it about the trinity that makes it so central to our Christian faith, and, yet that also makes it difficult to find words to describe. . . ?

Over the years, I've heard the Trinity described in lots of ways: like clover, or the sun. Some are filled with beautiful images and metaphors, others are so esoteric they are beyond understanding, and still others are so trite they are not worth repeating. One of the ones that has stayed with me over the years is at once fairly-simplistic and yet also helpful. . . .God is like water, it says - water has three forms liquid, ice and steam – all are quite different from one another and yet, all are at their essence the same - all are still water. God is like this because God also has three forms – these are also quite different from one another, and yet all are still God. Traditionally, we think of these as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, this is where we find the limit in this comparison, for God is not nearly as simple as water, and to understand God in only three simple forms or literal persons, is as one Anglican bishop said, is "to make God ... too small."

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I have become so dependent on this little thing – my phone. (Now, I'm not going to compare it to God, so don't worry, but I in describing it I am saying that it's like the way we try to describe the trinity. Hear me out.) This phone is not just the source of making and receiving phone calls, it's relatively simple interface allows me to read & send emails & texts, take photos & videos, post to social networks and plan my hectic life, and access information on about anything in a dozen languages in just seconds.

Such a gift! And yet, this phone can also be a source of a great deal of frustration. The computer in here is far more powerful than what flew the first space ships to the moon, and yet, despite having 16 gigs of memory, on a regular basis, it gets so full it can't update its programming. Such a small, complex & powerful thing, and yet it's still so limited.

Think, again, about the ways we try to understand God, and especially the trinity. They are likewise small & powerful, and yet so limited. God is so much beyond anything we can imagine or articulate. Like that Bishop I mentioned earlier said everything but God is too small to begin to describe God. And a part of what he was getting at is that there is another essential character of the Trinity that is not fully captured by these other images, including water, and that is the one of relationships and community inherent in the trinity.

One of the limits of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit language is we take it too literally – male god-head, male person, dove or wind-like spirit. Yet a gift of these, is understanding God's relationship with God's self. Yes, our God is one God, but our God is also a close-knit-three, and this can give us an understanding of how we can be in community with one another. The Creator, Father, Mother is not the same as the Christ, Son, Messiah, Redeemer, or the Spirit, Wisdom, Truth-Bringer and Giver-of-Life. And yet they are all in this relationship in which no one or two would be the same without the other.

Likewise, we are each unique; we each have special gifts that we bring to this place, and no one of us can take the place of another. At the same time, we also make up this community of St. Peter's church; which has an identity in its own right that is greater than all of us individuals put together.

A few years ago, my hairdresser simply wanted an intellectual argument. Yet the Trinity, really isn't so much something I'd want to argue about or try to prove, as it is a mystery that I like to experience and appreciate. It is at once beautiful in its simplicity, and yet also calls us to appreciate that God is somehow both simply present with us, and always just beyond our imagining.