

## Sermon for Trinity Sunday, June 12, 2022

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity. God: Father, Son and Spirit, three in one and one in three. I will let you in on a secret. Most clergy don't like to preach on Trinity Sunday. This is mainly because it is very hard for us to explain the mysterious nature of the Trinity. That is not because our congregations can't understand it, particularly. It's because we can't understand it. In fact, no human being can understand God. Not fully.

God, we believe, created all the heavens and the earth, the whole universe, and holds them in being moment by moment. Is it likely that we will be able to understand a Being like that? Come to think of it, we don't understand ourselves half the time. We have certainly made attempts to understand God, and we have formulated theology about God, but at best they are sort of approximations. You can't express the inexpressible, or explain something beyond our comprehension. And at worst they are heresies.

That's another reason we don't like to preach on Trinity Sunday. Throughout the ages of the church, the majority of Christians have come to some decisions about God, about who God is not, some things that we think are just dead wrong. We call these heresies. And it's really easy to slide into these whenever you try to say anything about God, because, after all, God is beyond our understanding. And these days anyone might be listening to our sermons, even our bishop or our theology profs. So it's no wonder we want to be careful about what we say.

Over the centuries, Christians of all kinds have ended up having wars over theology. The church has killed people who disagreed on theology and has broken up churches over it. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches split finally, the first major split in the church. Although I think there may have been deeper political reasons, the given reason was whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son or just from the Father. So theology is hard. And anyway, I've preached a fair bit of theology the last two weeks. So let's try a different approach to this question of God the Trinity.

Last summer our old cat Jessie died. I have always had cats in the house, all my life. So has Charles. We missed our kitties. So in November we got a kitten, Simon. And it was soon obvious Simon needed a companion, because his two human companions didn't want to scamper around and play all the time, so we got another kitten, Jeremy. They look alike, both grey tabbies, and are the same age but no relation.

When we first got Jeremy, he was a very scared kitten and hid under the couch. He had good reason. Simon kept attacking him and trying to kill him. We kept telling him, "He's your playmate, not your prey. We got him as a brother for you, not as lunch." Eventually, Simon stopped doing that, and Jeremy started playing with him, too, instead of hunching down and hiding. Now they are very firmly bonded and spend a lot of time licking each other, which turns to gentle biting and then harder biting and then a big tussle, and chasing around the house, and then more licking and then they settle down to sleep together.

Simon and Jeremy have brought us a lot of joy. Simon is an athlete. I call him the Rocket. He zooms around the house, up and down and under everything. He can leap silently onto the kitchen counter, checking if there's any butter to lick, or other tidbits. He knows, I think, that he isn't allowed to do this because he very rarely does it when we're around. When we see him, we spray him with water and clap our hands and yell, "No!" And he jumps down and runs away. Till the next time. Possibly he thinks it's a fun game.

Jeremy is not an athlete. But he is a master of stealth. If a door is open, he can slip in without you noticing. He's really good at hiding. His favourite place at the moment is under the couch in the Rec Room, where we keep the cushions from the patio benches. He slithers under, cause he's really too big to get under there easily, and up onto the cushions, completely out of sight and out of reach of his brother. And sleeps.

Now, these kittens are pretty mischievous. Simon has killed my beautiful Swedish Ivy that I've had for about 35 years. When we moved here, it took 3 of us, to carefully carry it, draped around like a bride's train, and carefully install it around the living room window like a living curtain. It looked lovely. Unfortunately, Simon enjoyed biting through the stem at the base. And I didn't notice till it was too late. One of them also enjoys pulling up the amaryllis bulbs and carrying them around. They both love romping around in and among the plants. No amount of spraying seems to be able to influence this behaviour. Simon enjoys pushing things off high shelves. They both like to sharpen their claws on our couches and wrestle with our nice rugs. There are days when I find them pretty hard to take. I sometimes long for the peaceful days, before kittens. But not often.

Because on the other hand, they are sweet. They really like to be with us. When we come home, they run to greet us at the door, if they aren't doing anything more important. They sleep on our bed at night. Jeremy has the best purr, and if I get up at night, he starts purring and follows me to the bathroom and back. When I read a book, Simon curls up on my shoulder and Jeremy sits on my feet. Jeremy loves to help me write my sermons, walking all over the keyboard. And Simon likes to be tucked into my dressing gown for a snuggle when I read the morning paper. They are so sweet. When they're behaving.

What do you think? Can the kittens understand us? Do they understand our thought processes? Or our motivation? Do they have any idea what we do when we leave the house? Well, no. They recognize us, the sounds of our voices, and the car, our smell, our appearance. They observe our behaviour at home. They know that when we go out the front door, they're not allowed to come, but sometimes they can come out the Rec Room door with us into the garden. They know that at lunch we sometimes give them tasty treats like tuna, but not at breakfast. They know that when we start shouting, "No!" they'd better run. And when we sit down with a book, we're ready for petting and snuggling. So they know us, but they don't know much about us, because their brains are not wired as well as ours.

So, they can't understand us. But can they have a relationship with us? Yes, absolutely. And they love us and trust us. They depend on us, and we show up with food and water and we clean their litter box and make sure they have their shots and otherwise

look after them. We love them. And they love us with all their kitty hearts. They don't need to be able to understand us in order to know us, to love us and have a relationship with us.

And that's the same with us and God. We don't understand God. We will never understand God, although we can certainly try and probably should. But if we think we're 100% right about God, we are almost certainly wrong. About something. Some churches make you sign a statement of faith, a nice, detailed, statement giving all sorts of things you have to believe about God or you can't belong. We don't do that. We don't do that, partly because it can be divisive, you know, we disagree about Item #23 so we split. And partly because we know that our understanding could easily be off a bit. We stick to the creed, which all the church has agreed on for centuries. And even then, most of us interpret it differently from each other. And we stick to our prayer books, worshipping together.

Here's what I think. God is never going to lock someone out of heaven because their beliefs weren't 100% right. Because that's an impossible demand. And God knows it, even if some of us don't. What does God ask of us? To love God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength, and to love each other as ourselves. That is the key. We may not be able to write a dissertation about God, but we can love God. As my kittens love me.

I was thinking of them when I read the Proverbs reading earlier this week, about Holy Wisdom. Wisdom in Proverbs has been understood by the church as a personification of God. Usually, we equate her with God the Word, or the Son, and sometimes with God the Spirit. But God, one way or another. And Wisdom says she was there in the beginning, helping with the work of creation, and daily rejoicing in God's inhabited world and delighting in the human race. God takes delight in us.

I take delight in my kittens. I don't expect them to understand me. They exasperate me sometimes, but I still love them. And I still snuggle with them, when they come to me, even if I've been annoyed with them. Because I know they're kittens and they're just acting like kittens. And I love them.

Now any time you say one thing is like another, you're bound to find ways it's not like that. No analogy is perfect. So, no, we are not God's kittens. We are not God's kittens. In fact, in some ways, my kittens have a lot more in common with me than I have with God, since we're both created mammals, and not the ultimate Creator. But of course, we are capable of learning and growing and of responding to God's approaches much more than the kittens are. In spite of our shortfalls, we are, after all, made in the image of God. So my point today is not that we are like kittens, particularly, but that in spite of God being beyond our understanding, we can still have a real relationship with God, can still love God. And ultimately, that is what God desires of us.

St. John says that God is love and ultimately, it's in love that we are closest to God. It's in love that we most live out the image of God that we bear. So let us, by all means, try to keep understanding God, but let us also have the humility to know that God is a lot greater than anything we can imagine or understand. On this feast of the Blessed Trinity, let us

open our hearts more and more to God's loving presence within us, because that we can understand and experience and share.