

Trinity Sunday YA 2023

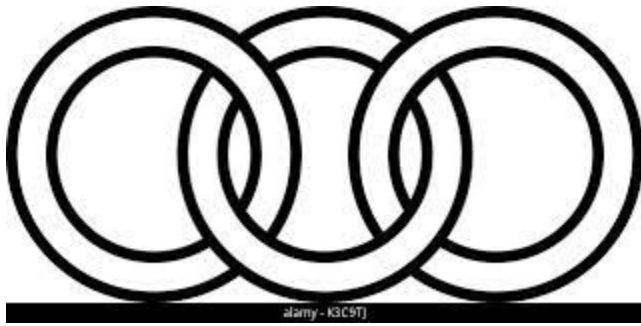
God, the Original They-Them
By the Rev. Salying Wong

[Hold up three rings.] Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Parent, Sibling, the Ties that Bind. Love, Beloved, Lover. Creator, Redeemer, Advocate. God, God, God. But not three Gods. It's Trinity Sunday: they are all here. Last week, when the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, everyone finally arrived. Of course, everyone was already here. Ah paradoxes. That's the Trinity. Another paradox. The three in one and the one in three. But, paradoxes aren't so bad. Life has so many paradoxes. Like, a bittersweet moment. Like anyone who wants to save their life must lose it. Like whoever wants to be greatest must be servant of all. So, if you think about it, God in Trinity represents life—our life. But, not life like this: one life, two life, three life—life separate. This might seem like it is easier, since if we live disconnected from each other, we don't have to be bothered. But, God in Trinity means that when we were created, we were created to be together.

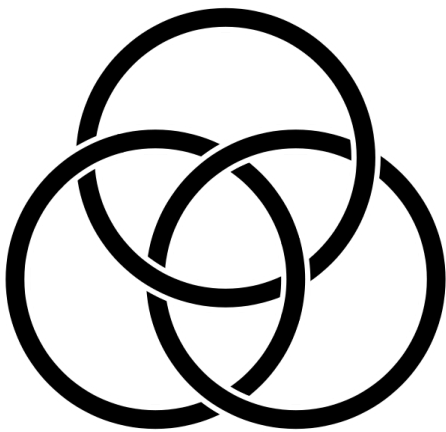
But what does this life together that God wants for us look like?

First, each person (circle) is equal. That's pretty good. But, being equal and separate—that sounds like something...something even the US courts could see was problematic. God in Trinity is our teacher that equal and separate is not the fullness of our human life. The fullness of human life is to be in relationship, to be connected.

But how? Shall they be linked like this? Here, each circle can be equal in size, but does not exist in equal relationship with respect to each other. If we hold them vertically, someone is on top and someone is on the bottom. Even if they are held horizontally, they are still not equal. The one in the middle is linked to two, but ones on the outside are linked only to one. The joining isn't complete.



In God, the joining must be complete. This is why we say God is one. God is at unity with God's self. Three in one and one in three. How can they all be connected so that there is unity and diversity?



Ah yes, this represents the joining that is complete. It holds diversity in unity.

[Unjoin rings.]

Let me tell you a story about the Trinity: [Hold up one ring] In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. [Join second ring to first ring], a Spirit (ruach) from God swept across the face of the deep. [Hold up third ring and connect them all] Then God spoke the Word. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. That Word was the light of the

world. And so the Word that was spoken was, “Let there be light.” And there was light.

Like I said, all three were already here, even before Pentecost. In fact, from the very beginning, the Trinity was working together to create. Consider again, In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth...”; “Bereshit bara Elohim et hashamayim ve'et ha'aretz...” Bereshit– “When begin”; Bara–create; et hashamayim ve'et ha'aretz–the heavens and the earth; Elohim–Gods; Wait? Was that part about Gods? Elohim is the plural form of El. El means God. Elohim means Gods. God, our God, was the original they-them.

Elohim continued to create in the communal form. On the sixth day, God said, “God made wild animals and creepy crawly things. But when God came to people, God said, “Let *us* make humans in *our* own image.” Not, let me make humans in my image. No, let **us** make humans in **our** image. The divine image is plural. When the bible says we are created in the image of God, it is best understood that the image is communal. My image is not divine unless it is connected to people, connected in intimacy, unless we are joined for mutual good.

In fact, the plurality goes beyond people. We were made to be connected in loving relationship with all of creation. What has been translated as dominion has been understood as domination. That is a great sin. Instead, this dominion should have been understood as domicile, as tending and caring for this earth, our island home.

[Hold up Trinity rings] This is an image of the Trinity. It is also an image of God in humanity. God desires the joining of people in this intimate and embracing way. This is why Pentecost had to happen first before we mark the Trinity. We first had to understand that when Holy Spirit created the church, its purpose was to be this kind of joining of people to people. This is what it means when we say we “respect the dignity of every person”, this is how deep our respect goes. No one is above another; no one is complete on their own. All are equally loved and valued by God. It goes beyond the human to all of creation. On Trinity Sunday, then, we

not only celebrate the reality that of God in Trinity, but us and how we live our life together. May we grow more and more into the likeness of the Trinity.