

Trinity Sunday - June 15, 2014

After the beginning of the Christian movement in the Mediterranean, controversy broke out over the nature of God. What does it mean that Jesus is present? Is he more than a martyred teacher? Could he embody the divine and be fully human, and how is he related to creation and all of nature? The culture at the time, dominated by the Greeks, had a strong philosophical bent. They drew upon strands of the Bible to lead to a Three in One, One in Three character of God, a Trinity, expressed in our creeds: I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son our Lord. I believe in the Holy Spirit who moves through all creation. Let me be a bit risqué in evoking how this character of reality undergirds everyday life. When I was with a church in downtown Providence, RI, the Satin Doll, a strip joint one block over, created a controversy. Their show would end with a nearly naked woman dancing alone on stage (or so I am told). The zoning code forbade such shows. In seeking a variance, the owner of the Satin Doll claimed that nearby Trinity Repertory Theater, which did Shakespeare plays, had nudity in their plays.

The question is: How do shows at the Satin Doll and at Trinity Rep Theater present different spiritual groundings? Is the stripper different than, say, Lady Macbeth walking across the stage almost nude? Are they different in what they convey? At the Satin Doll one isolated person is on the stage at whom we might gawk. There's no drama, no connections, except to individual voyeurs. At Trinity Theater no one stands alone. Even when Lady Macbeth sleepwalks across the stage in her night gown, she's relating to her husband and adversaries. The tragedy in Macbeth is a trinity of relations- husband, wife, and companion- turned upside down. They're fighting rather than supporting one another. We hope for cleansing and restoration. The Satin Doll has no tragedy, joy or hope because there are no relationships with which to begin.

The gospel grounds us in a holy conversation; and it's more than two way as every atom has multiple molecules. You and I live in a surrounding Spirit. When I do marriage preparations, I try to find if both persons share a Spirit of giving and receiving that's pulling them in the same direction. Is there a third Spirit that is surrounding the couple? We can feel it when that Spirit is there. More than You and I, we have a Thou in whom we live and move and have our being. If we're stuck in an argument - you and me, left and right, on the one hand on the other hand - it's good to ask what third party, what Trinity are we missing? Institutions become tyrannies without a sharing of power, with outgoing conversation. That's why we have executive, legislative, and judicial branches; presidents, boards, and stockholders; parishioners, officers, and vestries.

The ground of our conversation is Creator, Christ, and Sanctifier; the Holy One in Three sharing our humanity and all creation, a loving conversation between Father, Son, and Mother Spirit.