

**SPR | Trinity Sunday | June 7, 2020 | The Rev. Catherine Healy**

*Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness."*

Those plural pronouns in Genesis have been throwing people off for a long, long time. Jews and Christians, the readers of the Bible as a sacred text, believe in one God—not many. So why this “us”?

There’s no single or simple answer to that question, but for me, the most compelling explanation to us as Christians is that here, at the very beginning of the Biblical story, at the creation of the world, we get our first look at the Holy Trinity—one God in three persons, coeternal, coequal, hard to understand and impossible to reduce to any simple metaphor.

You can spend your whole life reading about the Trinity without fully understanding it. It’s more than three different ways of thinking about God; it’s more than one God with three jobs to do. And in the terms that we use to describe the three persons, we so quickly run up against the limits of human language. “Father” and “Son” and “Holy Spirit” can teach us something about God, but those terms are, by definition, temporal and finite—not much use to describe a God who is infinite and eternal.

And yet, as little as we may think we understand, we are born and baptized into a certain understanding. “Let us make humankind in our image,” says the God of Genesis. So here we are—made not only in the image of God the Father and Mother, God the Creator; or God as revealed in Jesus Christ; or God the Holy Spirit—but somehow, coequally, in the image of all three.

From the very beginning, we were crafted in the image of a dynamic and relational and *loving* God, a God who before the world was created was already living in community.

And if we remember this, if we remember that this image is our birthright, we can begin to form a theological response to the profound suffering

around us. We can remember who we are and what God is demanding of us, even in this time of fear, and anger, and lament.

We are made in the image of God, who made the world and called it good. We are called to care for that world as God does, to build up what is good, to cast out what is evil.

And in the face of evil, we are *not* powerless. God has given us dominion over the earth. That is a lot of power. Our task is to use that power by naming evil and removing it wherever we can: to name the racist violence that claimed the lives of Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd, and so many other Black and brown people whose names we will never know. To name the hundreds of years of racism that have made such violence seem normal to us. And to decide that true discipleship means we cannot accept this any longer, and we will make sacrifices to cast it out.

We are made in the image of God, who became human, who walked the earth, who fed the hungry, who suffered, died, and was buried before rising again, and who told his disciples: "Just as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me" (Mt. 25:50).

The crucifixion of Jesus was itself an act of racist and political violence. It was preventable. If we are silent in the face of the deaths around us, we are silent in the face of the crucified Christ.

We are made in the image of God, the Holy Spirit, the mother of us all, the one who shows up for us as a life-giving breath, a peaceful dove, a purifying flame.

Most of all, we are made in the image of a God who is built to be interdependent. No one person of the Trinity could exist without the other two. The creative tension between them is what makes our God God. Without any of them, Christianity could not be real, could not exist. We would live in a very different world. And so we cannot exist without one another: What affects one of us affects us all.

And this, I think, is where our hope lies. I know that, amidst all the devastation of the past week, I saw some kernels of hope. Here are a few:

On Monday, after the Chicago Public Schools closed down lunch pickup, a few members of our church organized in a matter of hours to pack and distribute bag lunches around the city for children who depend on those meals.

On Tuesday, I ran into other SPR members at an interfaith march through Bronzeville, where thousands of people gathered to protest police brutality and affirm that black lives matter.

On Wednesday, our food pantry was open, as it has been throughout the pandemic, run by careful and faithful volunteers who keep finding creative ways to keep people safe while also making sure that none of our neighbors goes hungry.

I'm recording this on Thursday, feeling grateful for these moments of grace, even as I know that our work is far from over. But I do believe this is the hope that will empower us to keep on working for change.

We worship a God who made the world and called it good, who sees the good and the hope and the potential in us. God's heart breaks with us when that world suffers from evil, when one of God's children is harmed. God is with us in our grief and in our rage. God breathes life into us as we dare to imagine a better future, one where everyone can breathe.

Now, more than ever, we rely on the love of a God who is ever-present with us, who made us in the full image of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Mother of us all. Amen.