

Trinity Cathedral Sermon
May 30, 2010
The First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday
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Good Morning. Trinity Sunday has arrived once again. And it is the practice in the church, on Trinity Sunday, for the Dean--or the priest who is in charge of whatever particular church they are in charge of--to find someone else to preach. (Laughter) The Dean went so far this year, as to go on sabbatical! (Laughter) So that he did not have to preach on Trinity Sunday. The notion is that we're supposed to tell you, and describe to you...the Trinity...that mystery that we know as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And I believe that most of you have probably heard sermons on the Trinity. And I intend to deliver a sermon on the Trinity as well. However...I hope that you have not yet had anyone deliver a sermon on the Trinity...and use as their image...juggling.

Might be new? Good. 'Cause if not...we're in trouble. A number of years ago, I decided that I wanted to learn to juggle. And so I got one of those books--I think it was like Juggling for Idiots, or Juggling for Klutzes...one of those. And, I started to read it. And the first thing that it tells you about juggling...the first thing you're supposed to learn is this: (drops a ball). Did you guys see that one? The first thing you learn is to pick one up. Because you're going to drop the ball alot when you juggle. And if you don't decide early on, that you're willing to pick it up, don't even try to learn to juggle. And I want to suggest to you, that this is not a bad image for God the Father.

God the Father is Creator. And we all know that God created an amazing world. And sometimes when we look at God's world, we see particular parts of it, and we wonder why God did that? In Minnesota, we really wonder why God made mosquitoes THAT BIG. (Laughter) And I have this notion that God made mosquitoes and thought they were really neat. And then He discovered that they're a bit of a challenge to some of the rest of Creation...and He had to create an entire sort-of ecosystem to make mosquitoes work within the system. So you could say...if you were really stretching it...and I might be creating heresy here. You could say that He kinda' dropped the ball on that one, but then He picked it up and figured out how to make it work.

And that's the same way with us in our Christian life...that learning to be Christian and following God is something that you don't do just one day. But you do it throughout your lifetime. And that alot of times, when we're doing what we think is God's work, we'll drop the ball. And things won't go well, or we'll make a mistake...and someone will be hurt. And if all we do is let that ball stay there...and we don't pick it up again...we lose ourselves. And we lose ourselves in God. And, so, the first lesson of juggling--if you're talking about the Trinity and God the Father is: When you drop the ball, pick it up again.

Now the next part that they teach you is: don't start with three. Start with just two in your hands. It'll be interesting to see if I can do this with all those lights on, but we'll try it. You learn this, and you go "one, two." (tosses two balls) "one, two." Looks very

simple, but when you first do it, it's not that simple. And so the challenge is just doing two..."one,two"...and doing that a whole lot...until you get it down. "one, two."

Now I want to talk about the second person of the Trinity, Jesus. When Jesus came, what Jesus did...was he taught us a lot about how to live in God. And when Jesus said, "When you pray...pray like this." And he taught his disciples what we call The Lord's Prayer. He was trying to get them to understand that that's a vehicle for getting to know who God is. And when he went up the mountain, and he sat with them, and he began to teach them what we call The Beatitudes...he was trying to teach them that if you want to be a part of God...and live as God's people in the world...then these are the things you need to know. And when he sat with his disciples, and told them story after story after story...parable after parable...he was trying to invite them into life in Christ...life with God. What he was giving us was habits...ways of being present to God, over and over and over again. Just like that juggling "one, two...one,two" It's something you don't do once. It's something you do over and over and over again. You see, Jesus said: "I have come that you might have life, and have it in abundance. And let me tell you how to do that." And he invited us into all sorts of ways of having that abundant life, now and in the life to come. Jesus' entire life, was about inviting those he encountered, into life with God. And Jesus' death and resurrection was the same invitation to walk with God, wherever that takes you.

Now the Holy Spirit. The next thing they teach you, in terms of juggling, is that at some point...you have to not just do two, but add the third one. But it's the same thing. And that's the interesting thing about this...you're still doing exactly the same thing...it's still "one, two,"...only there's another ball involved. And it goes like this. (juggling three balls), "one, two"... "one two"...you also are supposed to learn when to stop--just before you drop one. (laughter) That's another whole sermon...we won't go there. So...it's just simply "one,two...one,two"... "one, two...one, two"...one, two..one, two...(juggling three balls) and that's how you juggle. And here's the interesting thing about the Holy Spirit. You see, I believe that the Holy Spirit isn't really something else in all that other work we do, day in and day out, to be Christian. It is simply what happens when you move through and with God...over and over again...in those habitual ways of prayer and study and service to God. When you do that, all of a sudden, sometimes we absolutely understand ourselves to be in God's presence. We usually don't even understand it and know it at the time. Usually we become aware of it, right after that moment ends. And we go "Wow--that was really amazing. God was really present in my life."

Now what I've told you so far, sounds like something you could do at home. It sounds like something you don't need a community for. You just learn to pick up the ball, you learn to juggle. But there's another lesson. Because what happens to you when you start to juggle, and when you first begin this...and Nathan will tell you I'm right, because he tried this when he started juggling...I'm not sure he finished the course yet...but he is going to, I think. (laughter) So...what happens to you, is when you start to juggle, you don't have good control over it, and you start running like this with the juggling balls (steps forward, while tossing). Because you can't be in one place, and it doesn't go vertically. You want to go forward with it, And so, what they tell you to do, is stand in front of a wall. Because that wall is not going to let you go forward, unless you

want to run into it. So then, you end up juggling like this (tossing, while standing in place), and you get better and better at it. And I think that is just a reminder to us, that all of those habitual things we do as Christians, that keep us in connection with God, are things we need someone else for. Now, this is a stretch of the metaphor, because I don't want you to think of your friend and neighbor in the pew next to you as "a wall." That sounds a little unhospitable. But think of them as the mirror, that helps you reflect on your own life. Think of them as the ones who you can look to, as the people who are also walking this walk, are praying, working, studying, and learning to live in God. Think of them as the ones who are also encountering the Spirit day in and day out, and feeling stretched, and fulfilled, and energized by God's spirit in the world.

Today we give thanks for all of those people who are being confirmed into this church, and being received into this church, and reaffirming their vows. And these are people who have said "I found God in my life, in some certain way that's new and different, and I want to affirm that." And I want to ask God to be present with us. And we believe that God's Holy Spirit does come to us in those moments like this, in community today, when we stand before God, and we say "Yes, I re-affirm what was given to me at Baptism." And so this day I pray that you will all learn to juggle God's Holy Spirit, God's Son, and God the Creator. That you will learn and go from this place, and practice what it is to be in God's world, loving God's people, sharing God's word, and experiencing the presence of the Holy in your life. Amen.