

Trinity Sunday

Jesus said to Nicodemus: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but to put it right again.”

John 3, 16-18



A poor jeweller was arrested for a crime he had not committed. He was gaoled in a fortified garrison in the centre of the city. One day, months after his imprisonment, his wife turned up at the garrison gate carrying a small prayer rug. She explained to the guards that her husband was a man who trusted in God and who prayed every day at the appointed times. As he would be lost without his prayer rug, she begged the guards to allow him this one possession in his cell. The guards agreed that the rug would be harmless enough, and so delivered it to her husband. Five times each day he would unroll the rug and pray.

Weeks passed. Then one day the jeweller said to his gaolers: “Life here in prison is extremely boring, with nothing to do all day long. You know, I’m a good jeweller, so, if you would let me have some scraps of metal and a few tools, I could make some pieces which you could sell in the bazaar to earn a little extra money for yourselves. I don’t want anything in return. I just want something to do to fill in the time and to keep my skills sharp.”

The poorly-paid gaolers agreed immediately to the suggestion. Each day they brought some small pieces of silver and other metals along with a few tools, and in the evening they would collect what the jeweller had produced and take away the tools. Over several months, this proved to be a profitable arrangement for the guards. But one morning when the gaolers arrived, they found the jeweller’s cell empty. They were totally baffled as to how the prisoner could have escaped from what everyone believed was the most secure gaol in the whole country. Some months later, police arrested the man who had actually committed the crime for which the jeweller had been wrongly imprisoned. Shortly after this arrest, one of the prison guards happened to be walking through the bazaar when he came across the jeweller. After quickly explaining that the real culprit had been caught, the guard asked the jeweller how he had managed to escape.

Assured that he was not going to be arrested again, the jeweller told how his wife had gone to the man who had designed and built the prison and obtained from him the design of the locks on the cell doors. She carefully wove the design into the prayer rug. Because he prayed five times a day, the jeweller would frequently touch the rug as he bowed his head. In time, he came to focus the design and eventually realized that it was the design of a lock. From the tiny bits of metal left over from his work each day, he was able to shape a key to open the lock and escape.

Today's celebration of the Trinity invites us to ponder the mystery of God as Father, Son and Spirit in a relationship of love with the whole of creation. Throughout the history of the Church, theologians have come up with all kinds of analogies to help us to acquire some faint appreciation of a mystery that is ultimately beyond our capacity to grasp. In the 7th century, church father, John of Damascus, used a Greek word, *perichoresis* (*peri* meaning "around" and *choresis* meaning "dancing") to talk about God. He wrote: "Father, Son and Spirit are like three dancers, holding hands and dancing together in perfect harmony, freedom and love. They are deeply one, yet they are three. They are unified in one intimate, indissoluble substance, yet they are a recognizable community. Most importantly, they are what they are only in relationship to one another - in shared purpose, in mutual love that is expressed through each other for eternity. And so should we be united together." (*On Heresies, St. John of Damascus, Writings* translated by F. H. Chase, Catholic University 1958, p 161-163) The readings of Trinity Sunday are an invitation to us to ponder how we encounter God - God as Father and Creator, God as Son and teacher and brother, God as Spirit and love that binds us to God and to one another. This Trinity invites us, out of love which we simply cannot comprehend, to join the dance with God.

As we contemplate creation, our focus, too, can shift until we get a glimpse of how God has "woven" into our world a "design", an order that somehow binds together humanity and creation in compassion and justice. The notion or concept of the Trinity - of God who is creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life and love - provides us with a prism for looking at our lives and our world, enabling us to recognize in our relationships with one another and with all of creation the "design" of God's unifying love. The liturgical feast of the Trinity is an invitation to rediscover the many ways in which God's "design" is revealed in our lives - in the life God has breathed into us, in the wonder of creation all around us, in the values of compassion and justice and reconciliation instilled in us by Jesus and his Gospel, in the Spirit of God alive in the love we express to family and friends and work associates, in the support and acceptance we give and receive each day of our lives. Coming to recognize God's "design" for us and our world, hidden in the mystery of the Trinity, will release us from the "prisons" we create for ourselves or which others build around us, and will lead us eventually to a freedom we did not imagine possible.