

Trinity Sunday  
Romans 5:1-5, Psalm 8, John 16:12-15  
May 22, 2016  
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This year Trinity Sunday and Recognition Sunday fall on the same day. Today we celebrate our unique, if limited, understanding of God as three in one and one in three, and we celebrate the people of God who help make our worship of our triune God possible each Sunday.

I think it is most appropriate to celebrate Father, Son and Holy Spirit and God's people on the same day because I like to think of us as the fourth person of the Trinity. (Do the math and it makes as much sense as one plus one plus one equals one.) I recently read a pretty good partial explanation of the Trinity that states: The Father is above us, Christ is for us, and the Holy Spirit is within us. If we are not actually part of the Trinity, we are at least an extension of the Trinity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are depending on us to represent them on the earth and continue the work they started.

Years ago I was introduced to a little book by a lay Episcopalian named Verna Dozier. I even had the good fortune of hearing her speak when she visited one of my classes in seminary. Her book is titled The Authority of the Laity. I always tell my confirmation classes about it, so I had it out recently. In it she carefully describes two types of ministry that all lay people can and should participate in.

One she calls "Lay Ministry," and the other is "The Ministry of the Laity." You are probably thinking to yourself, "What's the difference between lay ministry and the ministry of the laity?" Let me explain.

According to Miss Dozier, lay ministry is what we do on behalf of the institution of the church, or what we do to help the ordained clergy because we clergy can't possibly do it all. We might say that today we recognize all the people who help me do various tasks or ministries in the church such as: lay readers, altar guild members, ushers, Sunday school teachers, musicians, singers, acolytes, etc.

Important? Absolutely! Necessary? For sure! Helpful? Unquestionably! Just wait 'til next Sunday when the choir and acolytes begin their summer recess. It's noticeable as our worship is diminished. Each of us has to sing louder, and the lay readers and ushers have extra responsibilities.

Verna Dozier would say that not everyone is called to this form of lay ministry, and the church doesn't need everyone doing something every Sunday, unless it is a very small congregation.

We also don't have to do these tasks forever, although we here are most fortunate that many of our members do serve in these capacities for years and years.

The ministry of the laity, on the other hand, is for everyone, and it doesn't take place in the church or on the church grounds. This is the work we do for God when we are not in church. If lay ministry is our part-time job, mostly on Sundays, the ministry of the laity is our full-time job where we spend most of our time as employers or employees, as neighbors, as spouses, parents or children, or as community volunteers.

Verna Dozier rightly says that while lay ministry is important and necessary, the ministry of the laity is far more so. This is our ministry of representing Christ to the world that may not know him. This is where we are living witnesses of the Trinity, daily displaying to all what our God is truly like through our words and actions.

You may have heard it said, "Bloom where you are planted!" That is the ministry of the laity. The church is where you come back to regularly to be re-inspired, re-educated and re-forgiven through the Word and Sacrament and fellowship to go back to our ministries in the home, workplace, neighborhood, community and school.

We all know what TGIF means, but how about TGIM – Thank God It's Monday. On Monday you go back into the everyday world to exhibit the love, compassion and justice of the Triune God to all you rub shoulders with. We don't ever retire from this ministry unless we leave the Christian faith.

In the passage from Paul's letter to the Romans, we heard that he and his compatriots boast of their sufferings because it produced endurance, character and hope. In other words, they are convinced their sufferings have made them better Christians and enhanced their ministry of spreading God's love.

A few Sundays ago in our adult class, we watched the last episode of a video presentation called "A Way through the Wilderness, Growing in Faith When Life is Hard." The speaker, Rob Renfroe, a Methodist pastor in Texas, told the story of asking a group of people in his church, who they thought most displayed a loving and kind Christian life. Somewhat to his surprise, they all identified the same couple out of the 11,000 members in his church.

He later asked that couple to tell him about their life journey. The wife told him that they had both been very self-absorbed as a young married couple. All that changed, however, when they gave birth to a special needs child. While they were at first bitter and angry toward God, through this hardship they learned to love someone more than themselves.

Saint Bonaventure wrote a lot about the Trinity. He was influenced by a lesser known Christian called Richard of Saint Victor. Richard wrote, "For God to be good, God can be one. For God to be loving, God has to be two because love is always a relationship." He went even further to say, "For God to be supreme joy and happiness, God has to be three." He based this on watching parents with their first child – lovers delighting in the same thing.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit delight in one another and happily extend that joyful embrace to us, the human family. Let's do all we can each day to enlarge this community of love to include everyone. AMEN.