

Trinity Sunday, 6/12/2022, Proverbs 8:1-31, Romans 5:1-5 John 16:12-15 (Elizabeth Felicetti)

So here we are at Trinity Sunday, the only Sunday named after a doctrine. A Sunday when seminarians will be trying out words like perichoresis on unsuspecting congregations. I learned fifteen years after ordination that trying to explain the Trinity does not help me fall in love or stay in love with God.

But stories and poems and images: those do help me to fall and stay in love with God, and at its best, the Trinity is for me an image instead of a dry doctrine.

Our Old Testament reading is from the book of Proverbs, which we don't get very often. I'm not sure why this explanation of Wisdom is one of the readings for Trinity Sunday, but sometimes when I try too hard to understand something, it gets wrecked. Instead, I will just say that I love the playful image of wisdom here. Wisdom was created at the beginning of the Lord's work.

Just that line gets me excited: the beginning of God's *work*. I love thinking of creation as God's work. You and I are not just children of God but works of God. Like a work of art. God is an artist. Thinking of God, of the Trinity, as an artist is one of my favorite metaphors, and does make me fall in love with God, which I believe is more important than trying to dissect or dispute the doctrine of the Trinity.

This idea of prioritizing something for its artistry or stories instead of trying to explain it makes me think of my love of birds, which has been an earnest hobby of about ten years, although I liked birds and even sometimes fed them before then. But ten years ago, sitting in my house looking at our deck, I noticed a blue bird with an orange chest. It awakened something in me. I remembered that when I left my last church in Virginia Beach, a parishioner had given me a book about Virginia birds and said Richmond was a good place to see them. So, I thumbed through that book and determined that what I had seen was an Eastern bluebird, and I became hooked on birds.

While looking that bird up and knowing its proper name was an important part of the story, the biggest part was my noticing. I had lived here over a year at that point but had not noticed these birds that are all around my yard, and around the church, too, including out by the labyrinth. Bluebirds have wonderful stories, such as how they were almost extinct in our country due to competition from starlings until people started building birdhouses for them: special ones with holes that were too small for starlings. They bounced back and thrived.

I love that about bluebirds, more than their name.

I have 168 birds on what's called my "life list" of birds now. Adding a new bird to the list is fun, but more meaningful is the excitement of seeing them, how I felt at the time, or whom I was with. I went birding, as it's called, with each of my parents before they died. I remember that they loved me so much that they got up early to share this with me. I remember how we used to watch finches at a feeder while eating breakfast. Birds make me think of my parents' love. I have gone "birding" with all my siblings and with Gary, so certain birds make me think of them, or of the friends I was with the first time I saw them.

I remember how I felt when I first saw certain birds much more than I care about the name I put on my list. Like the first time I saw a verdin, a little gray bird in Arizona that hides in bushes and trees and flits around, rarely staying still. When I noticed a gray bird in a bush outside my parents' apartment, I looked through binoculars and noticed that it had a beautiful yellow face, and I fell in love. Every time I see one now, my heart leaps. They are beautiful. A true work of art from God.

Knowing the name "verdin" was interesting, but I fell in love because of the shock of that yellow face, because of awe at God's artistry, not because of the name.

All this brings me back to the Trinity. Knowing complicated vocabulary about the Trinity doesn't make me fall in love with God. Hearing Jesus say in John's Gospel that the Spirit of truth is coming and that the Father is his does not make me fall in love with God.

In our Romans reading, hearing that we are justified by faith does not make me fall in love with God but hearing that hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit does make me fall in love with God, because there's a metaphor again. The Holy Spirit *pouring* God's love *into our hearts*. I love that metaphor. Sometimes I have a weary heart, especially after mass shootings. Especially when our country is so divided. Especially when our church has so many more empty chairs since before the pandemic, from death of beloveds or sickness as well as some people who got out of the habit and just aren't coming back. I love envisioning God's love being poured into my heart during this season. "Here's some love to help you nourish that hope," I can hear the Holy Spirit whispering when I read these words, when I hear them read aloud. Hope does not disappoint. We have reason to hope.

A Sunday devoted to a doctrine might not sound like a Sunday that can deepen your love for God but look for the poetry. Look for the images. Open your hearts.