

Today is Trinity Sunday and I have heard that clergy get very nervous at the thought of preaching on the Trinity. If that is in fact true, I think I know why. In any group about twenty percent are intuitives. They construct meaning systems and need big theories to make sense of reality. Great theologians through the ages have developed complex theories about the nature of the different persons and the inner workings of their relationships. Clearly they are intuitives. They are the ones who write theology books and clergy are taught that complex theology is necessary to explain the Trinity to people.

So, I could talk to you about “a trinity of mutually related persons and a unity of equal substance” or how “God exists as divine persons united in a communion of freedom, love, and knowledge.” Twenty percent of you would be fascinated and the other eighty percent would fall asleep.

That eighty percent are sensate people whose understanding of reality comes directly from experience. They know the real because they have touched the real. This is the reason why pilgrimages have been so popular throughout history and why singing is such a powerful form of worship.

The doctrine of the Trinity developed because Christians have *experienced* the divine in more than one way. The experience always comes first. Always. Even for those who love big meaning systems.

So last week we heard about the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. As promised, they were filled with the Spirit and began to witness to a variety of peoples. Throughout the year we hear about the experience of those who follow the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary. Every day here in Colorado we experience the beauty and wonder of creation. Our reading from Genesis explains the

origin and goodness of the natural world, referring our experience to the being behind it. Much of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God uses examples from Creation. Consider the lilies, the tree is known by its fruit, my sheep know me. I think God as creator is our primary understanding of God.

We have a doctrine of the Trinity because most of our experiences of God fall into one of three broad categories: God the creator, Jesus who revealed God and embodied truth and compassion, and the Holy Spirit, our advocate and the source of our power.

I am going to share some experiences with you. I have come to understand them as revealing different faces of God.

As most of you know, I went to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in April. First, let me say thank you. Thank you for all your prayers and support.

Haiti is a land of great contrast: dusty white roads and brightly painted buildings, hazy, smoky skies and lush vegetation. I saw several tent cities that are still full and then, higher in elevation as you go up the mountain, fancy hotels and large, beautiful homes.

I volunteered with a group called European Disaster Volunteers. They have a house in Port-au-Prince and a number of ongoing projects in the neighborhood. Volunteers come and work on the projects for however long they like, paying a daily fee for room and board so that any money that is donated can be used for the projects. The house is in an area that was not too badly affected by the earthquake, close to the UN compound and President Aristide's house.

A large mango tree shaded the front yard. What a gift to be able to go out in the morning and pick up a perfectly ripe and utterly delicious mango for breakfast! We had a Haitian cook who during the week made eggs for breakfast and Haitian food for

dinner. That meant rice with beans mixed in, chicken for the meat-eaters, stewed vegetables for the vegetarians, and pickleze, a wonderful, spicy cabbage salad.

One of the projects I worked on was a new, enlarged workshop for a group of Haitian women who make flip-flops from recycled tires. We built and varnished new work tables and storage stools for them to sit on. The purpose of this organization is to pay the women a good wage, not the two dollars a day the UN says it takes to live in Haiti, but enough to feed their children more than just rice and beans and to send them to school. I also spent two days at their new location building a shower.

To get there you walk a short way past the woman selling mangos, tomatoes, and other produce, past the small shop selling essentials like pasta, rice and cooking oil, and past the small bar. And when I say small, I mean small. Most of you probably have a closet bigger than this bar. Most shops in Haiti are quite small. The bar is on the corner with the main road which is paved and has many shops along it. It is very busy with trucks and tap-taps. A tap-tap is a small pick-up with benches in the back that is used as a sort of minibus. They go along established routes, but do not have designated stops. To get on, you just wave one down and to get off you bang on the side—tap-tap. They are very colorfully painted and usually have phrases like thanks to God or praise Jesus on them.

The workshop was about a mile away down this road to a busy intersection, through the gas station on the corner and along another busy road. All along both roads there are piles of rubble mixed with trash and then a drainage ditch. You don't even want to *think* about the water in that ditch. Imagine walking along that busy road. The heat, the dust, the exhaust, the filthy water. Then past the gas station and the car wash, on the far side of the ditch, there is a tiny nursery. Small trees, including banana and

mango, bushes in pots, and, best of all, lots of bougainvillea, it's bright pink flowers providing such a contrast, such a proclamation of the persistence and goodness of creation. It was unforgettable. The workshop itself was on a large piece of land with blooming trees, birds, and lizards. The air there was sweet and wonderful. I especially appreciated it when I had spent the previous day breathing diesel fumes from the generator because we had been without city power for so long.

If you go out from the house where I was staying and turn the other direction, past the video arcade and the cell phone store, you get to the other place where I helped out. European Disaster Volunteers is helping with an English school organized by a Haitian man named Johnson. The volunteers teach a few English classes and also teach the teachers from this school and another, also run by a Haitian. Nobody is paid and everyone wants to learn English in hopes that they will get a good job. They are very eager to learn and loved talking with us.

Lots of good work is being done in Port-au-Prince, schools, orphanages, clinics, building and sanitation programs. So many people seeing a need and trying to make a difference. To me, this is the spirit of Jesus. Jesus who had compassion on the people and did what he could to heal them.

Much of my time was spent with the other twenty or so volunteers. They were mostly from the US and Great Britain with one each from Ireland, Holland, France, and Albania. Most of them were in their thirties, a couple of us were older, and several were just eighteen to twenty. I was the only practicing Christian, though two others told me they were believers. From the beginning, my faith was known to others. When I introduced myself as working for the Episcopal Bishop of Colorado, most of them didn't know what a bishop was, but knew I worked for the church. Later I told people that I

was going to church on Easter with the friend of a friend. I didn't go around quoting scripture to them or saying "praise Jesus." I worked, talked, and ate with them, just being myself and occasionally answering questions about the church.

I got along really well with a number of people, but, of course, not everyone. Living in a house with that many people became frustrating. Some didn't do their chores and the bathrooms or kitchen didn't get cleaned. And the second week it seemed I spent a lot of time working on the English classes without actually doing very much. I began to think I had made a mistake coming with this group. Thursday was poker night with heavy drinking and partying until very late. Friday, Good Friday, I woke up in a not very good mood, said morning prayer in my tent, and when I went out for breakfast, my grumpiness was commented on. I replied that I was just in a funk and would be fine. I spent Friday on that lovely property, breathing fresh air and building the shower enclosure. We got it all square and standing up straight so I did feel better by the end of the day.

Then something very powerful happened. That night and over the next few days, three different women said to me something like "I wish I had faith" or "it must be nice to have a faith". Then Monday, the day after Easter, I came home.

On reflection, I think how I touched the other volunteers was the most important thing I did in Haiti. Something in me connected with something in them. I believe at some point they had experienced God, but had no context or language to understand that experience. I named it and modeled it, and I hope, planted a seed that someone else will water.

So I have tried to share my experiences of Haiti, a certain place at a certain point in time. But I want you to recognize that in so many ways I experienced God. God who

created everything and said it was good. Jesus who loves everyone, especially the forgotten. The Holy Spirit who gives us strength to be our true selves and reach out to others. I was outside my usual context, but we can encounter God anywhere at any time. When you look at the stars do you consider the creator who made the stars and set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth? When you eat a piece of bread or a juicy peach do you thank God who gave us every plant yielding seed and every tree with seed in it's fruit? Do you think of Jesus when you are moved by compassion for someone who is suffering, whether is be your neighbor, a stranger, or someone on the other side of the world? Do you know the power of the Spirit that fills you and does things you could never do on your own like Michael described last week?

Consider our gospel reading. It tells of the only resurrection appearance to the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew. "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age'." Jesus has given us the truth of God and we are to share it. We have experienced God the creator, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We have touched the real. Our world is desperate to experience the real, to know the love of God. Share your experiences. Share the real. You do not need to explain it with theology. Trust in the power of the Spirit. And know Jesus is with you always and forever, to the end of the age. Amen.