

Every now and then our liturgical calendar comes together in a way that relates immediately to current events and today, Trinity Sunday, when we commemorate the mystery that is our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we have hit the jackpot.

Yes, the God who is three-in-one is a great mystery and we are not going to solve that mystery today any more than the theologians who have spoken about it for the last 2,000 years have done. The graphic image on the service bulletin lays out the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in two dimensions and that is probably the best we can do to keep the mystery in front of us. Look at it with me. The Father is God and is not the Son or the Holy Spirit. The Son is God and is not the Father or the Holy Spirit and the Spirit is God and is not the Father or the Son. Together they form the Holy Trinity the God who is three and one whose very being reflects the mutuality of what it means to be in relationship.

Hang onto that idea of relationship because therein lies our salvation. As human beings we care called into relationship, a much deeper relationship even than that of parent and child, lover to lover, or friend to friend. The South African word *ubuntu* conveys of the power of the importance of these and any relationships as well as the over-arching relationship that we have with each other by virtue of being human. Loosely translated, for there is no equivalent in English, *ubuntu* means *I am because we are*. It says that our lives come into fullness of being through our relationships with one another and this is a human reflection of the relational nature of the Holy Trinity.

The purpose, the essence this relationship comes from the words in our reading from Genesis. “Then God said “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;...So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Let that sink in. We are created in the image of God. Male and female, black and white, old and young, abled-bodied and disabled, we are all created in the image of God. That sounds pretty exalted doesn't it? Our psalmist reflects on this by saying “*You have made him but little lower than the angels, you adorn him with glory and honor; You give him mastery over the works of your hands, you put*

*all things under his foot.* (Psalm 8:6-7) Frankly it's hard to believe when I look in the mirror, and it's really confusing when I look out over a church full of people or a screen full of gallery shots. No offense people, I love you all but it does make me wonder what does it mean to be created in the image of God?

We are in good company when we ask the question. Theologians have not come up with a definitive answer; it's certainly not that we look like God, or that God has a corporeal body, but perhaps that it is something of our nature that embodies God's intention in creation – free will, the charge to be stewards over the rest of creation, the capacity to form relationships. St. Augustine likened it to our soul. Our identity as the image of God is certainly not something we can attain by ourselves although we can do a great deal to render ourselves unworthy of the honor. Some have speculated that our reflection as the image of God was damaged in the Fall and that it is only restored again in baptism. Others have said that our capacity to reflect the image of God has been damaged forever. Regardless, the important thing to remember is that in creation, in the creation of human beings, God reveals something of God's self. So yes, seeing that in each other takes some work, even on a good day and given the events of the last two weeks requires even more work.

To be created in the image of God means I have to look at each person in that way – regardless of whether or not they are a shining example of that image. That's why racism is so wrong. The systematic oppression, ill-treatment, and exploitation of people because of the color of their skin is a grave wrong and a distortion of everything God intended in creation.

And that's the problem with sin. We have all been created in the image of God. God gave us the world as our dominion and God gave us the free will to exercise that dominion. Sin is born when we choose to exercise our free will against God's intention for our relationships with each other and the rest of creation. While we are creatures of God we are also sinners in need of redeeming. We are Both And.

Both And. These are two very important words, especially when feelings are running high as they are at the moment.

Both And. Both And says we must look at the death of George Floyd as a terrible tragedy. George Floyd did not deserve to die AND there is a lot in his background that is problematic. George Floyd was a human being, created in the image of God and he was brutally killed. His death is an example of the casual violence that has been perpetrated against people of color because of racism. As a white person it is hard to accept that I have a role in this spite of my best intentions. Therefore since we live in a system, in a society, that has perpetuated this injustice we are called to work for change. And that ain't gonna be easy and I hope you will join me as we think about what we can do right here in Patchogue.

It ain't gonna be easy because we are both exalted and fallen. The world we live in is both full of God's miraculous creative energy and fallen. Example after example is around us. Our police need to be supported as they protect the community AND police brutalizing protesters and failing to hold themselves accountable needs to be addressed. These positions are not mutually exclusive; such polarization is a false dichotomy and makes finding common ground, setting common direction very difficult. The way forward is to accept the Both And, and be willing to live into the tension between the two.

The best way to bridge polarized positions is through developing relationships, the relationships we are all called to be in with each other: male and female, black and white, old and young, abled and disabled, by virtue of the God who created us: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit whose mutual indwelling is a model for us all.

In this time of conflict we can do no better than to invoke the grace that Paul bestowed on the Corinthians after giving them a severe tongue-lashing for their contentious behavior. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." (2Cor 13)

Amen.