

Where do you find the heart of St. Mary the Virgin? This is a question that came up recently at seminary. I think it's an interesting question: The heart of St. Mary's - where do you find it?

As I look back on the last nine months, I am flooded with memories shared with many of you. I will never forget the warm reception I received on Labor Day weekend, liturgy meetings and shared sandwiches, the challenge and insight born of unanticipated loss, intimate conversations, Carla's chocolate stash, Manny's patience, beautiful music, a new Easter Vigil service, yesterday's Stop Hunger Now event, and the anticipation of this morning's baptisms. The heart of St. Mary's, for me, is about community. It is about relationship that is beautiful and complicated, blessed and mysterious.

In our Trinity Sunday gospel, Jesus is talking with his disciples about the work of the Spirit, that which is at the very heart of our lives. "I still have many things to say to you," he says, "but you cannot bear them now." When I hear these words, there is a part of me that wants to say, "No, Jesus, please tell me more. I want to understand everything. I can take it." And I imagine Jesus putting his hands on my shoulders, looking me square in the eye, and giving me a knowing smile.

The disciples were confused. They did not understand the work of the spirit made manifest in their friend Jesus, even as they witnessed miraculous healings and heard his countercultural words of wisdom. And yet they stayed in the uncertainty, faithful to a call others saw as blasphemous, dangerous, or simply nuts. The disciples didn't give up, drawing on their experience and spreading the word of God's incarnate love even in the face of an uncertain future. They weren't perfect by any means, but they kept their eyes on God, holding each other up and putting one foot in front of the other.

We are no different.

The challenge of speaking of mystery is as true today as it was 2000 years ago. Who can't relate to having more to say than others are able to hear? Who doesn't know the frustration of trying to convey the deep sadness or utter joy of an experience for which there are no words? These are examples of what I call "Trinity moments," times we feel God's presence but cannot adequately convey them.

I think the template for life is Trinity, our way of naming God in the context of Christian community. It is life in relationship with things seen and unseen, moments we can comprehend and mystery that is beyond our grasp. Because God cannot be contained by language or logic, we come to know God through each other and our shared experiences. Each of us brings gifts to the community table, be it our intellect or intuition, courage or compassion. Our faith affirms each of us as unique and invaluable and, at the same time, reminds us that we belong together as one inseparable family, dependent on God who created us, who liberates us, and who sustains us each and every day. It is in our journey together that God is best communicated.

This journey can be confusing sometimes. It asks that we sit in a certain level of ambiguity. Precious and holy “in-between” moments teach us that truth is not always defined by what we consider statements of fact. The truth to which Jesus points is revealed in relationship, to Trinitarian mystery that is manifested in how we treat one another and the world at large. It exists in the birth of a baby and the feeling one has as the sun slips beyond the horizon. We may not be able to explain it, but we know the value of reaching out to each other and sharing those moments together. Trinity is the truth we can live into, even if we do not always understand it.

This morning, we are blessed to have five babies being presented for baptism, “adopted by God into God’s family, which we call the Church, and given God’s own life to share, reminded that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ.”¹ This is a Trinity moment, to be sure! And we celebrate this sacrament in community, not in isolation. Baptism is foundational to who we are as Christians, marked with symbols of water and oil, with promises we cannot always keep, with deep hope for and commitment to our community. We hold each other up as we welcome our newest members and renew our own baptismal vows. We’re on this mysterious journey together. We do not do this alone.

That is why Jesus has his hands on my shoulders, looking at me and gently smiling. Like the disciples, he knows my human desire to understand everything, and he knows that I cannot possibly grasp all that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit encompass. Even so, the Trinity is always present, in everyday life as well as extraordinary events. Sharing a cup of coffee in the courtyard, honoring each other’s stories, and rejoicing in new life are all Trinity moments, if we are paying attention. We may not know what to do in every situation, but we have been shown the way. That is truth we can recognize and act on.

Jesus is right, of course. The truth of God’s presence is more than we can bear. For some of us, there may be days when it seems pretty clear, and then something happens that we cannot fathom. So we hold on to what life has taught us and make room for the unexpected.

Look around. Look around the sanctuary. Look at the people who are here with you today. You are the heart of St. Mary’s, a heart communicated through the blessing of community, through faithfulness and forgiveness, through bread and wine, through loving service and a sense of humor.

The Trinity is us.

¹ <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/holy-baptism>