

Holy Unions

The sermon text for today is the Epistle text mentioned in your bulletins, from Romans 8: 12-17, however, I am using a version from a Bible I *found* in 'my' office – called the *Contemporary Version*. If you read along from the bulletin – it may be irritating to you as we run across the differences, or, it may be enlightening, only you can know for sure, so use good judgment before you decide if you are just going to listen to me, or read along.

My dear friends, we must not live to satisfy our desires. If you do, you will die. But you will live, if by the help of God's spirit you say "No" to your desires. Only those people who are led by God's Spirit are his children. God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father. God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children. His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him. Amen.

So, here we are, getting ready to embark on a new life together, the historic Hyattstown Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and the Reverend Lisa Kay Comingore Smith and family. We are beginning a new phase, a new 'Holy Union'. How appropriate that it would occur on Trinity Sunday, a day many people struggle to

understand how the one God, can also be the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - another 'Holy Union' - 3 in one.

I thought it was amazing that my first sermon would be on Trinity Sunday - the Sunday that is between the two Wednesdays where the study group has been dealing with the book, "The Shack". Many of you have read this book, I know because as soon as I said I needed to read it three different people offered me their book, and others offered. But for those of you who don't know it, it is basically about a man having an encounter with the Trinity at a place that symbolizes the source of his greatest pain.

God manifests 'itself' in at least two different forms, and can do many others, according to the need of the individual at the time. She first shows up as an African American Female, and later appears as a male when the need for a father is more apparent. Jesus is - surprise, surprise, a Middle Eastern Jew, and the Holy Spirit is a very ethereal Asian female. They all encountered this man to help him come to peace,

recover from his great sadness and share his experiences with others for healing.

The creative use of imagery to help us to see (as in a mirror dimly) a *bit* of what we experience as the living God, can be extremely helpful. It isn't easy to get our heads around the idea that one can be three and three can be one - unless of course you are talking about the 3 Musketeers. And I, for one, am always grateful that God is greater and more mysterious than I can imagine, but I like trying, anyway.

I, personally, like the Trinity because each aspect brings about a whole new realm of possibilities for this power we call God. Only *one* of the three would be more limiting, and God has proven to be extraordinarily diverse in my life - and in the lives I've heard of from others. Those 'others' are those people who share their lives with God, and with us - on this Christian pilgrimage Home.

Home to God our Father - our Parent - our Mother - our caregiver . . .

Basically, the one who picks us up when we fall and yet must let go of

us and allow us to live free, learn, make our own mistakes and earn our own righteous sense of pride. God the Father is the one who is always there to come to for counseling, consoling and to be strengthened.

Home to Jesus, God and yet God's Son – God come to earth – our brother, one who has experienced our limitations and leads us to our inheritance with God. And this is one area that our scripture text meets my theological ramblings . . . because Paul wrote to the Romans saying, *'Only those people who are led by God's Spirit are his children. God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father.'*

Now the Roman understanding of adoption was very strict, so that after the rituals were all performed, an adopted child had the same rights to inheritance as a blood relative and it was done in such a way as to make no doubt as to the father and son relationship, regardless of blood.

And Paul is saying that Jesus came *that there would be no doubt* that we may all be in the very family of God. That we would know that God,

through Jesus *knows* where we have been, and *knows* what suffering and joy and laughter and silliness is really all about. Sometimes when I'm laughing, I hope that Jesus is sharing in that laugh. God knows we offer enough pain to be carried, so I try to throw a little laughter God's way.

I think *that* has something to do with the first part of the scripture where Paul wrote, '*my dear friends, we must not live to satisfy our desires. If you do, you will die. But you will live, if by the help of God's spirit you say "No" to your desires.*' The Holy Spirit enters into the union with each of us to call us to a higher way of existing, and when we do that, not only are we changed to the core, but are we becoming part of the holy union – the Holy Trinity. We are a part of that family – we are God's Children, we are brothers and sisters to Jesus, we share the inspiration and joy of the Holy Spirit!

We say no to our little desires when we realize that our purely selfish stuff can separate us from our holy family, but it can also separate us from our worldly community as well.

How often have we witnessed people driving, speeding around, talking on their cell phones, eyes on the road absorbed in their own little world, expecting the others outside their vehicle to make their way easier? Or we lock ourselves away in our homes and surf the net, watch TV, play games, rarely coming out to commune with the neighbors, lost to immediate self gratification. Now, granted, it is easy for me to say this since I've not had internet access for a while, and please don't take these examples to an extreme and say Pastor Lisa is against internet surfing!

What I want to say clearly is that we who are sensitized to a relationship with God realize that in all three aspects that we know; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we are a part of that, and we are a part of each other. Our personal desires can no longer be the end all of our existence, or we risk losing touch with that extraordinary experience.

The cross exemplifies this - the vertical relationship our connection to the trinity God - and the horizontal relationship we have with the earth.

And now we begin this new epoch of living and learning and loving in this venture of where the Holy Spirit will call us. We have yet to see how God will manifest in our endeavors, but we gratefully learn from Jesus, who gave us grace and mercy through his sacrifice.

I thank you for calling me here, for following God's guidance for all you've done for the parsonage, the church building, the church united, this community, in your own circles . . . You are truly amazing people in my eyes and we as a family together will have some blessed adventures together. Thanks be to God who has so many facets to communicate with us.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.