

## Holy Trinity - Year C - 2007 John 16:12-15

1. In a recent graduation speech the Benedictine Monk and writer Joan Chittister told a story:
  - a. Once upon a time, a warlord rampaged through the countryside killing and destroying as he went.
  - b. Word spread quickly as he approached and the peasants fled for their lives.
  - c. As he approached the last of the villages to be conquered, the warlord said with a smirk, "This village is empty too, I suppose?"
  - d. "Well yes, my Lord" his lieutenant said, "Except that is for one monk who refuses to leave."
  - e. The Warlord was furious. "Bring that monk to me immediately!!!!"
  - f. They brought the monk to the town square.
  - g. "Do you not know who I am?????" The warlord shrieked. "I am he who can run you through with a sword without even batting an eye!"
  - h. "And do you not know who I am?" the monk said quietly, looking him straight in the eye. "I am she who can let you run me through with a sword - without even batting an eye."
  - i. Joan told this story to illustrate where they could find God in the new world opening up before them.
2. And yet we can almost see the graduates sitting there, in their caps and gowns patiently listening.
  - a. What do you suppose they were thinking about?
    - i. Probably the graduation gifts they were going to receive,
    - ii. the jobs they were going to get
    - iii. The futures they were going to have.
  - b. Indeed, if any were really listening to her words
    - i. They had to be confused.
      - (1) after all if they were supposed to be anyone in the story
        - (a) they were supposed to be the warlord, right?
      - (2) Because for years they had been told by their parents
      - (3) taught by their teachers
      - (4) and formed by our society
    - ii. To see the world as a struggle, a war if you will, where only the strongest, the smartest, the bravest and the best looking will win.
    - iii. One wonders if any of them got the story - one wonders if any of us,
      - (1) engaged in wars and struggling to protect our society from whatever new threat the government or new media warns us about this week,
      - (2) gets it either.
3. One group who would, was that community that gathered around the gospel writer John.
  - a. We know that because when we read his gospel,

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- b. we see he was writing first and foremost for a group of Christians who were fighting battles against those who were persecuting them from without their community,
  - c. And waging wars against rival factions from within.
4. We see those battles reflected in the Gospel readings that we have been hearing since the fifth Sunday of Easter.
- a. Scholars call them the “farewell discourses”
  - b. because they were written as Jesus’ long “goodbye speech”
    - i. to his disciples on the night before he died,
  - c. But without stretching the analogy too far (and I may be!)
    - i. We might call what we have been hearing a commencement address; given to John’s little church (and therefore to us) as they lived in a world where it was often a struggle just to survive.
5. On the **fifth** Sunday of Easter Jesus told them (and us)
- a. That the way everyone would know they belonged to him was to love one another.
6. On the **sixth** Sunday of Easter Jesus told them (and us)
- a. That they would know that the Father and the Son were with them because of the peace they would experience in the midst of their struggles
7. On the **seventh** Sunday of Easter Jesus told them (and us)
- a. That that they would be one with one another just as Jesus and the Father are one.
8. ON **Pentecost** Sunday Jesus told them (and us)
- a. That their unity would be visible in the love they had for one another,
9. And today the Feast of the **Holy Trinity**, Jesus tells them (and us)
- a. That their unity with Jesus and the Father would be visible because of the way the spirit guide them with the truth Jesus and the father shared.
10. Jesus gave his disciples this commencement address to illustrate where, even after he had ascended to the father, God could be found in the world.
- a. And yet we have sat here week after week, patiently listening.
    - i. Tell me what were we thinking about?
      - (1) What we always think about at Church!
        - (a) How do these pretty words
        - (b) say anything to me about God in my life
        - (c) which is not always pretty
          - (i) because I have to struggle and fight just to raise my kids keep my job pay my bills and survive?
  - b. And that is undoubtedly what many in that little Church John was writing to thought.
    - i. Except for one thing:
11. There was one community that they were a part of
- a. that they had no part in creating,
  - b. and yet whether attacked from without or divided from within,

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- i. no one it seems could ever destroy it.
12. This community spoke about that law of love and made peace their constant wish,
  - a. and even if they often did not achieve it,
  - b. at least in a world where everyone else was busy hating and fighting,
    - i. it was their goal.
13. and in a world where only the strongest, smartest or the bravest were considered powerful
  - a. this community gave them the power that comes from being powerless;
  - b. of recognizing that all of it ultimately belongs not to me,
    - i. nor to the one standing there in front of me with a sword, but to God.
14. It was the Church where Jesus said, and that little Church believed, they could find God;
  - a. we would recognize God here, so that we might serve God out there, in the world.
15. Now over the years the Church has sought to help in that identification;
  - a. in fact, the feast of the Holy Trinity is meant to help us in that search,
    - i. by giving us the theological definition of God as one in nature, three in persons;
      - (1) Father, who creates,
      - (2) Son who saves,
      - (3) and Spirit who makes Holy.
16. We are told that this definition is a mystery, and indeed it is;
  - a. But perhaps not quite as much as we would like to believe;
  - b. For whenever we create that community where people are welcome,
  - c. whenever people are saved from hatred and fighting through the law of love and by the gift of peace,
  - d. and whenever people are made powerful simply by realizing that power over others is nothing in comparison to the power of serving others,
    - i. We do not so much understand the Trinity, we reveal the one who creates us and saves us and makes us holy,
      - (1) and we invite others to come and allow God, to do the same for them.