**Trinity Sunday, May 26, 2013, Pro 8, Ps 8, Rom 5: 1-5, John 16: 12-15; Rev Mary S. Trainor**

We just heard these words from Paul in Romans, “***Since we are justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ….hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”***

On a recent hike in the woods, I noticed a tree that had a strange top. The trunk was normal and straight to about 10 feet tall, and then at that point three branches stuck out at angles. Each branch was slightly different from the other, but bright green leaves flourished on all three. The botanical reason for this strange branching is well known: the apex of the tree had broken off (perhaps by a lightning strike), which caused the plant hormone responsible for lateral branching to be released. Here we are on Trinity Sunday, with forest and lake and river scenes around us that are among the most beautiful in the entire world. We are here to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and today to celebrate the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This particular tree from my hike in the woods serves as a metaphor for the Holy Trinity.

The theological concept of the Trinity is difficult for us to grasp, so a metaphor like the tree helps. The whole tree (branches, roots leaves, and all) has the same DNA; it is only one tree. The straight trunk is where all the nutrients are transported, coming up from roots that ground the tree. The life of the tree is best observed from the leaves on the three branches, where the sun is absorbed and energy and oxygen are given out. So it is with God. We get to know God through the three persons, the powerhouses. One branch, Christ, saved us, understands life as we know it, and introduces us to the Father branch. The third branch, the Holy Spirit, sweeps around connecting to the other two; the Spirit advocates for us, is present and energetic in the world today. The root of the word "trinity" is "unity;" the love, grace, and joy of God are all synchronized in the Trinity. St. Patrick put it this way in Hymn #370 in your Hymnal, **"I bind unto myself today the strong Name of the Trinity, by invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in Three."**

Over the centuries in Church history, there has been great confusion regarding the Trinity -- wars have been fought over it, new religions were formed because of it. The Trinity can be debated *ad infinitum*! How the Trinity works is a Holy Mystery; God's way is for us to not fully understand it -- because if we were able to fully understand it, then we would be God. One day back in the 4th century St. Augustine, while puzzling over the doctrine of the Trinity, was walking along a beach when he observed a young boy with a bucket. The boy was running back and forth, pouring water from the bucket into a little hole. Augustine asked the boy, **"What are you doing?"** The boy replied, **"I'm trying to put the ocean into this hole."** Then Augustine walked on, and reflected how this related to what he had been trying to do -- he realized that he had been trying to put an infinite God into his finite mind.

So, today we are not going to debate or compare theological views regarding the Trinity - because we have something more important to do -- and that is to have an encounter with the living God. We are here to do this. We are here embracing the fact that our One God is available to us in rich ways.

On a recent Thursday afternoon, a precious member of my family had a major health concern. She was given a medical test on an emergency basis, and had to wait three days for the results. She called me crying; I wanted to jump on a plane and go to her side right away but she said, “no, I just want to pretend everything is normal.” So, I tried to be normal too - but wasn't doing that very well; I was worried. So, I engaged several prayer chains, and prayed with people. In those times of prayer, we prayed to the Holy Spirit for guidance and strength, we prayed to God the Father Creator, we prayed to Jesus who understands our challenges here on earth and who loves my family member even more than I do. That night I did not sleep well because of worry. Then, on Friday morning, I experienced a smile generated from within me, and realized everything was changed. God had answered my prayers, and I knew everything was going to be OK no matter what -- it was like God said to me, "**I've got this one, so just go about your life now, Mary**." This was not just wishful thinking I was experiencing. Peace washed over me, and I was able to go about my life normally. On Monday when she texted me with the good news I was not surprised. But, even if the news had not been good, I knew the situation was in God’s capable, all loving, all caring hands.

Take a moment or two right now to recall a time in your life when you sensed God's presence in you, around you, when God was so close that you were drenched with perfect, divine love. Take a deep breath, and recall that time now. (*Pause*) What was it like? Maybe in that moment, like mine, you sensed hope, divine hope. Maybe you sensed being accepted in a way you had never felt before - or maybe you experienced a rush of supernatural energy or courage - or maybe it was you saying words you knew did not come from you. Maybe the moment was at Communion, at a font, in prayer, in acts of kindness, or caught up in the wonder of God's creation hiking or fishing or boating on a sunny day. Those times, when we sense God's presence, bring us tears of awe and joy. God is in us, around us, lifting us up to a new place, a place of greater hope.

Maybe you couldn’t recall a time when you really experienced God’s presence, or that time was so long ago that you are can’t seem to recall it now. Maybe you are struggling with your relationship with God right now, and so this recalling exercise is difficult for you. It’s OK. Whatever your situation is, be fully present today, here in the beauty of creation, open to what God is doing in you, through you, around you. Trust in how much the One God loves you just the way you are, no matter what difficulties you face. God is mightily present here in this place, and the love pouring into your hearts is a sure thing.

So, my prayer for you today is from our Romans reading -- that you, “***have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ…. because God’s love has been poured into (y)our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”*** I pray this in the One Holy Name of God, the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. Amen.