

Trinity Church
May 18, 2008

Trinity Sunday
RCL, Year A, Trinity Sunday

A Sermon Preached by The Rev. James C. Ransom

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

Today, the 150th anniversary celebration of Trinity Church begins. Our Alleluia and thanksgiving will continue the whole year through until May 2009, when Trinity will celebrate its recognition by the Convention of the Diocese as a parish of the Episcopal Church.

It would be fascinating, if it were possible, to interview those eighteen families or so that banded together in 1858 to form Trinity Church, worshiping at the Methodist chapel, and looking for a place to build a church. I wonder what they thought they were doing in forming a community of faith. My guess is that they didn't even ask the question. Being church and doing church was an unquestioned part of early Victorian life in America. They were doing what was natural and expected of Towson's leading citizens.

That is certainly not true now. Being church is not expected of anyone in our society, and is viewed as anything but natural. We must give a conscious and convincing account of the faith that is in us. So, what do we think we are doing, being Trinity 150 years on, Christians in 2008?

The Great Commission of Matthew's Gospel is a place to begin. Jesus says, "Go to Towson and make disciples, baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." In this passage, being church means doing. Church is a series of active verbs: *go, make, baptize, teach, obey, command*. And when you do these things, Jesus is in the midst of doing them, glorifying and redeeming our doing into Christ himself, until all is perfected at the end of the age. That is quite a vision.

Bishop Tom Wright spoke for three stirring nights this winter at the Ecumenical Institute of St. Mary's Seminary here in Baltimore. He spoke eloquently about what it means to be the church in today's world. Being the church now is the same as it has always been. What is different is that we must articulate, affirm, and teach being church to ourselves. We must bring church to life within our community of faith in a conscious and intentional way. When we do, this is what it looks like in all its glory.

First, the church is those who have died with Christ in a death like his, and have also been raised up into a resurrection like his. This is Paul in Romans 6, but it is the heart of what being church is all about. We not only believe, but experience time and again that God has made us, by faith, through grace, a New Creation, drawn into his kingdom, into Jesus' resurrection. We live in two worlds at once, joining them into one. Baptism is how we experience this reality, and the Holy Eucharist is how we sustain ourselves as Christ's resurrected and glorified Body in the world. This is our mission – to baptize all people into resurrection and life, and lo! Christ is with us always.

In this Community of Resurrection and New Life, *prayer* is our new language. We are a community of prayer. Through prayer, every aspect of life is enfolded into God's love, every situation drawn into Christ. Prayer is how we sustain one another in Christ.

Scripture is the voice of Jesus in the Community of his resurrected body. We listen with the ears of faith. We listen together so that we may encourage one another and help one another understand God's Word. We support one another as we strive to obey his commandments. Scripture is more than personal: it is Christ speaking to us as his Body, as a community sanctified in his Name.

When we live as part of God's New Creation, we live in the world in *holiness of life*, just as Moses did, barefoot on holy ground before the burning bush. We do compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. It is our way of life. It is how we give one another God's grace. It is how we make the New Creation real in the world. In the lives of others.

All of this draws us into the heart and soul of God. It draws us into *love, it shows us love*, it frees us to love as God in Christ has loved us. Love is our glory – the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus – love revealed in us.

That is what Trinity Church is, has been, and what it was founded to be. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, make us the community of the Holy Spirit. We honor this past. We build this future. Amen.