

In honor of Father's Day. A dad taped this note to his son's bedroom door. Jake, Unload and reload the dishwasher. Then take a picture of it. Then walk the dog and take a picture of it. Then send me BOTH pictures – and I'll tell you where the power cord for your XBOX is. Love you, Dad.

A teenage boy had just passed his driving test and inquired of his father as to when they could discuss his use of the car. His father said he'd make a deal with his son. "You bring your grades up from a C to a B average, study your Bible a little and get your hair cut. Then we'll talk about the car.

The boy thought about his father's proposal and decided he'd settle for the offer.

After about 6 weeks, his father said, "Son, you've brought your grades up and I've observed that you have been studying your Bible, but I'm disappointed you haven't had your hair cut."

The boy said, "You know, Dad, I've been thinking about that, and I've noticed in my studies of the Bible that Samson had long hair, John the Baptist had long hair, Moses had long hair, and there's strong evidence that Jesus and the apostles all had long hair."

And the father replied, "Did you also notice that they all walked everywhere they went?" **HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO THOSE OF YOU WHO KNOW THAT PRIVILEGE.** We'll have a special blessing for you at the end of the liturgy.

Here in Church world it is Trinity Sunday. For many people today, the Trinity is nothing more than an archaic religious term that is occasionally bantered about in churches. It is not a word that most of us have much passion about. But on October 27, 1553, in Geneva, Michael Servetus was publicly burned to death for having denied the doctrine of the Trinity. (LECTIONAID, Vol 9, #3, June-August 2001, p. 7) So pay attention – there's going to be a test – and I've got a fire ready!

First, we are dealing with mystery here. The Trinity is supposed to be the central – even the paramount – doctrine of our Christian faith. And yet we've often been told we shouldn't try to understand it because it's a mystery. But I believe mystery isn't something that we CANNOT understand; rather, it is something that we can ENDLESSLY understand. There is no point at which we can ever say 'I've got it!' Always and forever, mystery gets US! In the same way, we don't hold God in our pocket; rather God holds us and knows our internal shape and deepest identity.

When we describe God, we can only use similes, analogies, and metaphors. All of our theological language is just an approximation, offered tentatively and in reverent awe. That's the best our human language can achieve. We can say, "It's like..." or "It's similar to..."; but we can never say with absolute certainty, "It is..." because we are in the realm of beyond, of transcendence, of mystery. We absolutely must maintain a fundamental humility before the Great Mystery; otherwise, religion worships itself and its formulations instead of God. St. Augustine said, having written 15 VOLUMES! On the Trinity said that "the one who speaks of God – lies!" He knew that after 15 huge volumes, he still didn't 'get it.' So I'm not going to help you 'get it,' and I'm just going to tell you a couple of lies. But I'm hoping it will help to allow GOD to GET you.

Second, we tend to think of the Trinity as some stodgy dogma. Some of the greatest writers on the Trinity were called the Cappadocian Fathers of the 4th century – Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, and Basil of Caesarea eventually developed some highly sophisticated thinking on what soon was called the Trinity.

"This is not claimed as original material; it is the fruit of years of reading and research, collated by volunteers, but not always correctly footnoted, or not footnoted at all. It was created solely for the purpose of an oral proclamation in the context of the liturgy of the church. Every effort has been made to provide the necessary attribution to the authors of the sources."

It took three centuries of reflection on the Gospels to have the courage to say it, but they circled around to the best metaphor they could find, and the Greek word they daringly came up with was PERICHORESIS, or circle dance. We can here the base for the word choreography in the Greek root. Whatever is going on in God is a FLOW, a RADICAL RELATEDNESS, a PERFECT COMMUNION between Three – a circle dance of love. God is Absolute Friendship. God is not just a dancer; God is the dance itself. Franciscan Richard Rohr wrote a wonderful book on the Trinity a couple of years ago and titled it THE DIVINE DANCE.

We don't tend to think of God in such playful terms – dancing, and the dance itself. And we are the poorer for it. We've tended to make God into OUR image – somewhat peckish, stingy with His gifts as we so often are, holding back with His grace, withholding forgiveness when we sin, demanding perfection we know we can never achieve. But none of those are in keeping with the Daddy God revealed to us by Jesus in the gospels. But we keep going back to those images much to our loss.

Here's how Meister Eickhart, the wonderful 14th century German Dominican mystic described God: Do you want to know/ what goes on in the core of the Trinity?/ I will tell you./ In the core of the Trinity/ the Father laughs/ and gives birth to the Son./ The Son laughs back at the Father/ and gives birth to the Spirit./ The whole Trinity laughs/ and gives birth to us. (THE DIVINE DANCE, Richard Rohr, p. 166)

Do we ever think of God laughing us into existence? For the pure pleasure of it? Because He loved us even before we were born – and it is His LOVE – not His demands – that sustain every breath we take?

Third, implications for a deeper and richer understanding of the Trinity. With a Divine Dance going on, and a God who laughs us into existence -- we get a very different picture of God. Instead of God being the Eternal Threatener, we have God as the Ultimate Participant – in everything – both the good and the painful. Instead of an Omnipotent Monarch, seeing God as Trinity demonstrates the actual and wondrous shape of the Divine Reality – which then REPLICATES ITSELF IN US and in “all the array” of creation. Instead of God watching life happen from afar and judging it.....we have a God inherent in LIFE ITSELF.

Instead of God as distant and uncaring, we have God as the LIFEFORCE OF EVERYTHING.

Instead of God being an Object like any other object, we have God being the LIFE ENERGY BETWEEN EACH AND EVERY OBJECT – which we call LOVE or SPIRIT.

This allows us to see God as much larger, AT LEAST coterminous with what we now know to be a forever-expanding universe, and TOTALLY INCLUSIVE – what else could any God worthy of the name be?

Instead of the small god we seem stuck with in our current – and dying – paradigm, usually preoccupied with excluding others who do not agree with us, the Trinitarian Dancers reveal God as WITH US IN ALL OF LIFE instead of standing on the sidelines, always critiquing which things belong and which things don't, and finding fault with everyone and everything.

The Trinitarian Laughters reveal God as ALWAYS INVOLVED instead of the in-and-out deity that leaves most of humanity 'orphaned' much of the time.

Theologically, of course, this understanding repositions grace as inherent in, central to creation, not as an occasional additive that some people occasionally merit – usually by going to church or making First Fridays or Saturdays or saying so many or particular novenas or rosaries or prayers. Now there's nothing wrong with any of those! But the POINT of them must be always remembered. Are they making us laugh with God – dance with others – and being those who call the world INTO the dance and laughter of God? Rather than

those who are putting others off by our smug superiority and judging of others as inferior who do not do the same things that we do?

This God we have called 'Trinity' – is the FLOW who flows through everything, without exception, and who has done so since the first nano-seconds of the Big Bang. Thus, everything is holy, for those who have learned how to see.

The implications of this spiritual paradigm shift, this Trinitarian Revolution as Richard Rohr calls it, are staggering: every vital impulse, every force toward the future, every creative momentum, every loving surge, every dash toward beauty, every running toward truth, every ecstasy before simple goodness, every leap of life, every bit of ambition for humanity and the earth, for wholeness and holiness, is the eternally-flowing life of the Trinitarian God.

Whether people realize it or not! This is not an invitation we can agree with or disagree with. It is a description of what is already happening in God and in everything created in God's image and likeness.

This triune God calls us, impels us, to live easily with God everywhere and all the time; in the budding of a plant, the smile of a gardener, the excitement of two teenagers in love, the tireless determination of a research scientist, the pride of a mechanic over his hidden work under the hood, the loving nuzzle of a faithful dog, the tenderness with which eagles feed their chicks, and the downward flow of every mountain stream.

This dancing, loving God is found even in the suffering and death of all of these very things. How could this not be the life-energy of God? How could it be anything else? Such a big definition of life must include death in its Great Embrace, "so that none of our labors will be wasted."

In the chirp of every bird excited about a new morning, in the hard chiseled beauty of every sandstone cliff, in the deep satisfaction at every job well done, in the passion of sex, and even in a clerk's gratuitous smile to a Harris-Teeter customer, in the passivity of the hospital bed, "the world, life or death, the present or the future – all belong to us – and we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God" (cf. 1 Cor 3:22-23) – as the apostle Paul puts it. It is one Trinitarian Flow since the beginning of time.

Unless God's seers – unless WE can begin to make this paradigm shift, there is no way that God is going to be able to 'save the world.' Courtroom scenes and penal systems do not inspire or change the world. They are totally inadequate to communicate the Divine Banquet and invitation; the dance and the laughter; in fact, they make it largely impossible to imagine. It is not about being obviously and overtly religious. We have tried that for centuries with pitiful results; it's about being quietly joyous and cooperative with the divine generosity, the dance, the laughter – that connects everything to everything else. Then we are part of the great dance, we are Trinitarians – recognizing that we are made in the image and likeness of God -- at last. Amen. (last section adapted from THE DIVINE DANCE, Rohr, p. 36-38)