



ALL SAINTS CHURCH  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

**Celebrating Community!**

A Sermon preached by the Rev. Wilma Jakobsen  
and Youth Preachers Ashley Davis & Laura Vossler  
June 7, 2009 - Youth Sunday (Part I)

Here at All Saints Church we talk about community all the time, about building community, being community, becoming community. We love this community, we serve the communities around us, we take actions to strengthen the communities of which we are a part. Every Sunday we joyously celebrate community, and today, we celebrate community even more - for two very specific and special reasons. We are celebrating the feast of Trinity Sunday and also Youth Sunday, and so in honor of the celebration we have three preachers for you today, not just one, so we will be three voices, three people, yet only one sermon. Ashley Davis and Laura Vossler will offer their part of the sermon as part of our celebration of community, along with all the fine youth who are leading our worship today – thank you wonderful Trouveres! And many other youth who are part of the service today.

You might be surprised to hear that Trinity Sunday is one of my favorite feast days. It's not because I understand the mystery of a doctrine that says that God is three persons yet one God. My mathematical brain wants to affirm that one plus one plus one equals three, not one. But I believe that the trinity asks us to leave our dualistic mindsets switched off and to be open to a different way of thinking, a kind of divine mathematics that works not to make us perplexed or to wrestle with something we will never understand, but in quite a different way, gives us a picture, a model of how we are to live and be that is inspiring and empowering. In essence, the Trinity is about the mystery of relationship and community, about an interconnectedness and interdependence that is reflected in the unity and oneness and mutuality of the relationship of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Or perhaps more helpfully described as St Augustine did, as Lover, Beloved, Love, or Julian of Norwich, as Maker, Lover, Keeper. (Source, Word, Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer)

The Scriptures speak of the oneness and the love that Jesus shares with God, of Jesus' desire for us to share the same joy of that relationship of oneness and love, and of the Spirit who is the both the gift of the risen Christ and the spirit of the risen Christ, whose role it is to spread Christ's love in the world. If you read the book *The Shack* by William Young, you would have met the refreshingly beautiful characters of God, in the book called by different names from Elousia to Papa, though really she was as a loving, tender, welcoming black woman; the young Hebrew man named Yeshua or by his common name Jesus; and Sarayu the Spirit, or Keeper of the Gardens, an Asian woman. One of the gems of the book was the way that Elousia explained Jesus to Mack, the person at the center of the story, who just could not understand this, though he liked what he experienced. She said that Jesus

becoming human though he was also God was like a bird deciding not to fly but to remain grounded. It does not take away its ability to fly, but does alter its experience of life significantly, she said. She talked about getting the head issues out of the way in order to be able to work on the heart stuff. She tells Mack that she appears as a woman but suggests that he calls her Papa, simply to mix metaphors, to help him falling so easily back into his religious conditioning. All in the interests of his deep healing, which he seriously needed.

All of whom, when asked by mystified Mack which one of them was God, all answered in unison, 'I am.' Elousia said, "We are not three gods, and we are not talking about one god with three attitudes, like a man who is a husband, father and worker. I am one God and I am three persons, and each of the three is fully and entirely the one. Pg 101; "If I were simply One God and only One Person, then you would find yourself in this Creation without something wonderful, without something essential even, And I would be utterly other than I am. And we would be without love and relationship. All love and relationship is possible for humans ONLY because it already exists within me, within God myself. I AM love."

It's a beautiful way of describing how all three persons of the Trinity are in relational community together, yet they are one. Yes, it is a mystery that we will never wrap our rational minds around. Yes is God not mystery? If we understood all of who God is would God really be God? Yet this mystery of the Trinity gives us a glimpse of who God is and how God is and therefore how we should be and can be.

An 8th century theologian, John of Damascus, used this image (from the Greek word *perichoresis*, meaning 'a dance around') that God is like the movements of a dance – this makes God the dancing God! Each person of the trinity in relationship with the others in different ways at different times, interconnected, interdependent, working and dancing around in concert with each other. That's something to get excited about! It means that at the heart of God, there is relationship, there is community. God IS relationship. God is a community. The essence of God is relationship and community. God models this for us and desires and invites us to share in that relationship, in that dancing around, in that love. There is a shared life in the heart of God the Trinity that is like a dance. And if the heart of God is shared relationship, then that is a model for us and how we are to be and live in community. It implies an invitation for human beings to share in life with God and to "become partners in the divine dance". It is also an affirmation of diversity in community, again, a picture of how we can live together in the beauty of diversity.

What does this mean for us in practical terms? Well it explains why there were some young people today walking in the procession with paper chains draped all of them. Each of the links of those chains represents children and young people around the world who are hungry, who live in poverty, and that our global community is imprisoned by the chains of hunger and poverty. Our youth gathered in May as they do every year, to fast for thirty hours, to learn about hunger in the world and raise money to feed others who are hungry. They did this because they are part of the larger global community, to be partners with God in caring for others, part of the global dance of caring and sharing. Well done All Saints Youth, keep it up!

Today we have an opportunity to give voice to that relationship of interconnectedness and mutuality that we share with all people in the community of the world and this nation and our state. We've been reading in the news for months about the lack of funds in the state of California and the inability to solve the crisis. It has come to the point where the State legislature is about to make decisions that will drastically affect the lives of those who cannot adequately feed their families or get health insurance. Some of the best programs that support people in our own communities like CalWorks and Healthy Families are in line to be drastically cut or even terminated, leaving thousands more without. We have a letter that has been crafted by our P & J department together with input from others in CYF, that will be sent to state legislators, stating that cutting programs and services to those in our communities who are most marginalized is completely unacceptable and articulates a different way forward to prevent the cuts.

We will be asking you to add your name to the list of signatories. While it may not seem like much to add your name and your signature, it is a concrete way of today, naming firmly that you are part of the human community and you care for the others with whom you are connected, even though you don't know who they are. It's a way of saying today, Youth Sunday, that you care about youth who are the future of the country. It's a way of saying that youth are an essential part of our communities and we stand as one with them.

Add in about Prop 8 and standing in solidarity... as part of the community.

So today we celebrate community and act out our commitment to living in community! We celebrate that we are part of a larger community. We celebrate the youth in our community and all that they do. I hand over now to Ashley Davis and Laura Vossler who will share their journey of growth in this community and the community of faith.