

“More than Just a Memory”
Rev. Dr. Scott Paczkowski

Now, as a minister you love Sundays when you are commissioning a whole bunch of youth, when you have a baptism, and you bring new members into the life of the church. That is a great Sunday!

What you have trouble with is when you have Trinity Sunday. We don't admit that out loud very often, but Trinity Sunday is not Christmas or Easter for ministers. (Laughter.) You have to figure out what in the world are you going to say this time about Trinity Sunday.

In 30 years, I have tried all sorts of creative, manipulative and inappropriate ways [laughter] of trying to describe the Trinity. I have even balanced three candles together on a table, twisted them into one wick, lit it and said, “Look - Father candle, Son candle, Holy Spirit candle - but one flame.” (Laughter.) Nobody got a lick of knowledge out of that. (Laughter.) So I'm still trying to figure out how in the world do you describe the Trinity in a way that matters?

Then I got this wonderful blessing. Kris DeWild gave me a book by an author that we both like very much. I have mentioned him before - Richard Rohr. He wrote this wonderful book called “The Divine Dance.” In it he talks about reclaiming the Trinity and what that means for him. It helped me a great deal. He said many Christians act like pagans when they talk about God, because they talk about a God that is distant; they talk about a God that is judgmental; they talk about a God who is a spectator, who watches the world, hands down judgment and condemnation, but isn't particularly helpful.

Richard Rohr, who is a Roman Catholic priest and monk, said, “God is always present with us. We are blessed and guided by a God who is continually trying to reach out to us and we need to get away from this pagan idea of a distant God. The Trinity is the way in which we find God, understand God, and come to love God and be loved *by* God.”

Now, I'm still scratching my head trying to figure out how in the world we do that, because you have people continually saying, for example, “Well, you know ‘the Trinity’ is not in the Bible.” Well, the word “Trinity” - that is true - the word “Trinity” is not in the Bible. However, I would argue that the concept of “the Trinity” goes throughout the Bible. You go back to Genesis, you look at Abraham and Sarah, they were the mother and father of the monotheistic religions we have. Christianity, Judaism and Islam, all call Abraham and Sarah our mother and father.

When you go to that story of the promise that was given to Abraham and Sarah, that they would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky, and then God kind of left them alone for a whole bunch more years. They had given up. They were probably in the equivalent of in their 90s and, all of a sudden, one day you have three “somethings,” three angels, three persons of a Trinity. We are not quite sure what they were, but they always show up, and Abraham knew that something special was going on. So, he gathers them in, and they show hospitality and they feed these three angelic figures. Then, all of a sudden, the three God-like figures speak to Abraham and remind them again that God has not