

Trinity Sunday a

Early on, in fact just after I was ordained, a question was asked of me, “Why did God do all of this?” My reply was why did God do all of what? Why is there a universe – why is there creation? Why does anything exist at all?

It happened right around this time of year, and I had just read the epistle for Trinity Sunday, so I quoted the last line of the epistle. The passage is taken from the Book of Revelation. St. John is describing what he sees in God’s throne room when he first goes up to heaven. He does not claim that this is the act of his fertile imagination. He says it is what he saw.

God the father, who is visible only in a dramatic light show, is sitting on his throne, and he is surrounded by twenty-four older men who are wearing white robes and gold crowns. These men are believed to represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the other twelve the apostles of the church.

In front of the throne are seven candlesticks which stand for the Holy Spirit of God who gives seven-fold gifts. There is also a glassy, crystalline sea-like expanse in front of the throne. Behind the sea and around the throne there are four living creatures who are covered all over with eyes.

Creatures look, respectively, like a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle, but they are also clearly angels of some sort. They have six wings apiece, and they sing “Holy, holy, holy” – just as we do. They are connected to the angels who appear in the Old Testament books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and the church has always used them to represent the writers of the four gospels.

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures worship God with praise and thanks. Their song is, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

So there we have the answer to the profound question, “Why is there anything at all?” The answer is – because God likes it that way – it makes him happy - he has created everything, and everything that he creates is for his pleasure.

Now this description of heaven – exciting as it is – seems to be only two-thirds of what we need to have Trinity Sunday. The Father and the Holy Ghost are in the picture, but where is person number two? Where is the Son? The Son is about to appear with his Father in the form of a Lamb who has been killed and then has come back to life – “a lamb as it had been slain.”

In today’s gospel, Jesus, the lamb, says that what should convince Nicodemus that he knows what he is talking about is that he has been to heaven. Who could be more believable about the things of God than the only person who has actually been up where God is?

Jesus is telling Nicodemus how God creates creation. God made the creation for his pleasure, and he made human beings to be like him – in his own image, as we have read in Genesis. One aspect of our being made in God’s image is that we are as free as he is to do whatever we want. God was free to create the universe. We are free, within obvious

physical limitations, to make any choices we want to make about our own lives. This is known as the theory of “free will.”

It turns out that human beings use that freedom badly. We set out to act in our own best interests but our perceptions are distorted. So we go against what God wants us to do. We are too self-involved to be able to see what God wants us to do is what is in our best interest.

To get everything back on track, God had to intervene. God learned that he had to stop trying to appeal to man's better nature, because man does not have a better nature. The nature we have is corrupted by our disobedience and our selfishness. The cure – the means of re-creation – is baptism. In baptism someone who has been born for the first time through God's creative activity is born again through a new outpouring of God's creative activity.

Jesus says that you have to be born again if you want to go to heaven. We have to be born of water and the Spirit. We use water because Jesus said to use water. We use the formula “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” because Jesus said to use it.

Jesus prescribes the Trinitarian formula, because in baptism we are taken up into the life of the Holy Trinity and united with it. We are born again as organic parts of God. God the Father adopts us as his own children. We experience the death and resurrection of the Son as we become grafted into his body. The power that makes all this happen, and which ties us to God forever, is the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Trinity is not a theological riddle or a reality that exists only in some misty realm far away from us. The Trinity describes the life of God. The purpose of his life is to send himself out to us and to all of creation. Love and power radiate from the Father. The love and power is the Holy Ghost who revealed himself perfectly in the Son. We are members of the Son's body.

So, indeed, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.”