

I have 3 invitations for you this morning,
but first a quick word about Trinity Sunday.

Trinity Sunday is the culmination of the first 6 months of the Christian year.
For 6 months we walk together through all sorts of seasons and feasts
meant to teach us about God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit.

Advent and Christmas,
when the Son took on human flesh and dwelt among us.

In Epiphany the voice of the Father sounds out across the heavens,
and the Spirit descends on the Son at his baptism.

In Lent the Spirit drives the Son into the desert to do the will of the Father.

In Holy Week Father, Son, and Spirit all cry out
at the suffering of the Son on the Cross,
but at Easter the Father raises his Son from the dead,
and the Son breathes the Spirit on his disciples.

Finally, at Pentecost the Spirit settles on the disciples
and through them among all those gathered in Jerusalem
in the name of the Son.

And now, today, 6 months later, one last celebration.

Today we gather to proclaim that the Creator and Judge of all things is God;
and that the One who lived and died and rose from the grave is God;
and that that One who guides and unites us still is also God.

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Now, if I can let my nerdy, comic-book side out for just a minute,
I'll say that Trinity Sunday
is a little like the end of the first Avengers movie.

After all the great adventures, the origin stories, saving the world,
the movie closes with our heroes finally assembled:
Thor, Iron Man, Captain America,
the whole team finally together, finally - the Avengers!

Trinity Sunday is like that last scene.
After all our seasons and stories and adventures,
we finally see the reality of God in 3 persons. The blessed Trinity!

Cue the triumphant music! Roll the credits! But...now what?

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Now we know that Father, Son, and Spirit are all God,
but what happens next?

That's what these next 6 months are for,
this season we sometimes call Ordinary Time.

And if Trinity Sunday is like the end of the Avengers movie,
maybe Ordinary Time is like the end
of an even older movie - The Graduate.

Think about that great scene at the end
where Dustin Hoffman and Katherine Ross have finally escaped
the lives everybody else wants them to live,
and jump on a bus to start the lives they want for themselves.

You think it's a perfect Hollywood happy ending,
but as the credits roll you see their faces start to change.
We did it! We're free! We're together. Oh God, what do we do now?

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When I get back from my sabbatical
it's likely we'll be starting a capital campaign to renovate our campus.
Nothing's been decided yet
but I think it's likely we'll be taking up this challenge.

But instead of thinking about the drawings we got from the architect,
I find myself thinking about what kind of church we could become.

I'm not talking about buildings,
and I'm not just talking about Holy Trinity here.
This is about the Gift of God church, too.

Before we change our buildings, we need to change ourselves.
Before we ask for your money for a big project
we need to invite you to set your hearts
toward the future God is calling us to.

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So, 3 invitations this morning, and Pastor Endirias, if you'll allow me,
I'd like to make these invitations to the Gift of God folks
just as much as Holy Trinity folks.

The first invitation is to those of you on the edges of our churches,
those of you who slip in and out quietly,
still a little undecided about your faith
or about making this a real spiritual home for you.

My invitation for you is - jump on in!

Jump on in to the waters of faith.

Jump into the deep end of the Gift of God church or Holy Trinity.

I'm not saying you have to. I'm saying you're INVITED.

Invited into a life of love and service, of sacrifice and celebration.

Invited to live the Christian life deeply, here,
with these children of God.

Go from the edges of this community to the middle of it.

Develop deep relationships here,

where you know and pray for each other,

where you celebrate the good days and grieve the hard ones,

where you invest some sweat equity in one of our ministries,

where your heart breaks when someone here dies,

where you let down your walls and discover what it looks like
to see the image of Christ not in people generically,

but in real people you know deeply,

in Ariel and Tish and Charlie and Antonio and Ernie,

in Ender and Sarah and Lillian and Joseph,

in Jan and Julia and Kimiko and Max.

Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment,

that you love one another as I have loved you,"

and Jesus wasn't talking about people in theory.

Christ-like love of real people will always be our greatest witness

to the goodness of God,

so go deep into the lives of your sisters and brothers,

at either or both of our churches.

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My second invitation is to those of you
already immersed in the life of our churches,
already loving, serving, and giving here, but...
kind of here only as long as this place meets your needs.

Without judgment or condemnation, I'm talking to those of you
who are here only as long as things are going good.

For as long as you like the sermons, or the music,
for as long as the outreach is what you're in favor of,
for as long as you agree with the politics
for as long as the children's program is good for your kids
for as long as there are people here your age.

My invitation to you is to make Holy Trinity or the Gift of God church
your church in good times and bad.

To move from being a consumer of the church to being a pillar of it.

Long ago there was a new couple who came to Holy Trinity.
They liked it here and decided to put down roots.
But after a while things started to change.
The parish went through a tough season.

One of them said to the other,
"Maybe we should look around for another church."

The other person thought for awhile and said,
"That sounds like somebody who only roots for the Braves
when they're winning."

Decades later that couple is still right in the heart of Holy Trinity,
still guiding this parish through good years and bad,
and I think they'd both say they're glad they did.

I say all this because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow,
but everything else changes.

We have wonderful leaders here at Holy Trinity.
The Gift of God church does, too.

But leaders change.

Will, Ender, Rhett, Ellen, Endirias, me - we're all temporary.
For that matter, David & Ellen & Julia & Cindy
& Berkeley & Dawn & Nancy are all temporary, too.

So I invite those of you who have found a home here
to put down deep roots, to commit for the long haul,
to take up the mantle of shepherd in good years AND in bad,
and just like that couple who came here all those decades ago,
I think it will be a blessing to you.

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My last invitation is to you pillars of our 2 churches,
to you who have guided us in good years and bad:
I invite you to make room for new leaders.

Not just replacing leaders who might be feeling tired,
but for new ideas, new ministries, new communities,
and new ways of proclaiming the Gospel.

I once heard a priest say that most people
don't really want their churches to grow all that much,
they just want them to grow THIS much bigger
so they can keep doing what they're doing
but have it be a little easier.

Grow just enough for 3 more Sunday school teachers,
just 2 more choir members, just 5% more giving.

I understand that impulse more than I used to.

It's a desire to protect, to preserve this precious community you love,
and it's a temptation for clergy and laity alike.

But as tempting as it is, it's not how Jesus called us to live.
Jesus didn't give us the Little Commission.

So, to you long-time leaders of our 2 churches,
I invite you to look for ways to make room for new leaders.

Listen when they tell you their dreams
of where the Spirit might be guiding our churches.

Be encouragers. Be partners.

Tell the new leaders what God has done for you here,
and help them find a way to tell new stories about God's goodness.

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For 6 months we have told the story of God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit moving through the life of God's people,
showing them new possibilities whenever they thought
everything was settled.

Let these next 6 months be our response to God's amazing work.

Let us dream of new things we can do together, here,
with God's help and guidance.

Amen.