

This morning we celebrate Trinity Sunday. To the best of my knowledge it is the only feast of the Church that does not focus on an historical, or scriptural event. It is a feast noting our efforts at understanding God. It is, in short, a feast of mystery.

Years ago I found myself visiting a dying man in the hospital. He had been diagnosed with acute leukemia. No less than 48 hours after his diagnosis the disease had swept through his body, and ravaged his organs. As he lay unconscious his family could only await his death.

His wife, and his two adult children had not left his side since his diagnosis. They had stayed with him as he spun downwards. They had spoken to him of their love, they had shared their memories, they had said their goodbyes, and had made their peace.

I stopped by the hospital simply to check on them. I knew the situation was critical but I expected the man to live for several days yet. As I visited with the family the son kept his eye on the heart monitor. After about twenty minutes he said calmly, "Ya'll he's crashing." In a matter of minutes his heart rate had dropped thirty points.

I summoned a nurse, and we gathered around the man's bed. The son asked if I would say a prayer. I obliged. As we began to pray the man's heart rate was only about thirty-six beats a minute.

We calmly prayed; united by the family's deep love, affection, and faith. As I finished the prayer we opened our eyes to a flatline. He had passed. The family, though deeply saddened, found great peace that they had escorted their father, husband, and best friend into eternity with their prayers.

As I reflected upon this experience I was reminded of something I learned in seminary: No one argues theology on their death bed.

We are surrounded in this life by mystery. The love we share, the faith we have, the grace God offers us are all mysteries. One of the great honors of being a priest is that in moments like I just described I have the opportunity to glimpse the great riches of God's merciful mysteries.

At times the Church falls victim to believing she can explain such a mysterious God. At times we all may be tempted to believe that we have God figured out. But such an idea is folly. Our God is a mystery, and our life in Him is filled with mystery.

This morning the Trinity can serve to confound us. It can present us with a theological stumbling block, or it can stand as a symbol that, in the end, God is beyond our ability to comprehend him.

At times we need a sense of theological order, we need a sense that the things of God actually make sense. But there are times when those ideas fall short. After all life itself sometimes doesn't make sense. That is when the mystery of God can bring us hope.

At times that can be very frustrating. As a preacher I used to dread Trinity Sunday. How can I explain the Trinity in ten minutes, preferably less? I cannot, so very early in my career I gave myself permission to be willing to stand within the mystery of God on Trinity Sunday.

I find the Trinity a comfort because it reminds me of the mystery of God. Deep down we all know that we cannot comprehend God. But the good news is that we do not have to.