

Grace and peace be yours in the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

How do we explain the Trinity? How can God be both three persons and yet one? The Holy Trinity surely is a wonder. Every year we set aside one Sunday in our church calendar to marvel at the mystery and majesty of Almighty God. The Bible never uses the term “Trinity” or directly addresses God’s trinitarian nature. Our understanding of God as three persons in one comes from our experience of God. God has been revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

On Holy Trinity Sunday, we reflect on this great mystery. And every year we consider a Biblical text which mentions God as Father and also Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This year our text is from John chapter 16. The passage comes from the evening when Jesus will be arrested. Before they go to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus and his disciples meet in an upper room.

You get the feeling that the disciples sense something ominous is approaching. A storm is rumbling on the horizon. Their beautiful fellowship and electrifying ministry with Jesus are about to take a fateful twist. The disciples are scared and confused. While in that upper room, Jesus has a long discussion with his friends. Our reading is just a small part of that conversation.

Jesus has told them many, many things. And as we begin our reading today, he says, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” Such a profound statement! There certainly are things we cannot bear.

One statement I cringe at when hearing is when someone says, “God won’t give you more than you can handle.” I don’t believe that. There are some things we can’t handle, and

God helps us with them, and guides us through difficult times. The Holy Spirit guides and supports us in many and various ways. Pauline, one of my high school classmates was diagnosed with cancer and given a year to live. She was in an accident and during her recovery it was discovered that her cancer was completely gone. She knows it was a miracle. She tells others of God’s wonders in her life. My friend Patti, has battled cancer for the last nine years. How does she cope knowing she has no chance for recovery.? -- Faith. She professes her faith in God, and finds joy in every day she wakes up. She could not do that on her own. God is with her. She tells others of the joy she finds in Christ.

Now, let’s go back to that verse--“I still have many things to say’ to you, but you cannot bear them now.” The things we cannot bear. There are different reasons why we can’t bear them.

It might be that we currently don’t have the capacity to receive and absorb this new reality. The past two years have been catastrophe in our nation and the world. Life has worn many people down. The harsh realities of living and a

scarcity of compassion have dried them up. Their soul has become hardened and calcified. They're like parched earth. From lack of human kindness and consideration, they've formed a hardened surface. That crust is a protective measure. It preserves the precious and diminishing waters remaining deep within. The crust may protect them, but the problem is that when the rains do come, their hardened exterior is unable to open up and receive this blessed nourishment! So, the rain runs off and drains away. They're not able to bear it.

Our views can become calcified and hardened. We form our opinions, and then we live with them. We've chiseled them into stone. Our views on race, our judgements of others, our sense of how the world operates. We've made our deliberations. The jury has concluded and the judgement has been cast.

But God is always about doing something new! The world doesn't stay the same! God entered this world as a little baby, and something new was unleashed. The Early Church was confronted with Gentiles, and something new had to unfold. The old rules no longer supported the Spirit's unfolding. At one time, the notion of slavery was just fine in our country. But the winds of the Spirit brought about a new way of thinking. God's Spirit is breathing new life into this old, old world.

How can we bear this new thing? What we need is the tender and slow rain of divine compassion. We need the Holy Spirit to gentle into us. We need God's Spirit to slowly open and gradually fill our pores and our ears so that our hardened crust will soften up, so that we can drink in these divine waters. We need that Spirit Word to form a new pathway into our hearts and minds. And that Spirit promises to guide us into all the truth.

Another reason we find ourselves unable to bear anything else is because we already have enough on our plate. In fact, so much has been heaped on our plate that it's falling off and running over. When we don't have the ability to bear one more thing, God's Spirit will guide and strengthen us. At just the right time, God will supply us with the strength and courage and wisdom necessary for each day's needs. Like manna, God's Spirit sustains one day at a time.

God is in the process of molding us into what we will be! We may not be able bear things today, but God isn't finished with us yet! Look at St. Paul. He had no idea what was coming his way. At one point, he was just a coat boy. Saul, as he was known then, kept an eye on the wrappings for the lynch mob as they stoned Stephen to death. As he stood there that day, protecting the clothing from any bloody splatter, in no way could he imagine that he would become God's chief evangelist to the Gentiles! His mind couldn't handle, that! But by the time the Holy Spirit was through with him, Saul became an altogether different man. He became Paul. And Paul could bear more than Saul could ever dream of.

In Paul's long journeys, he came to know that suffering produced within him an endurance, an ability to bear what he thought he could never bear. But he wouldn't have realized that endurance without the suffering. He couldn't get to the strength of this new endurance without first suffering.

And that endurance, that endurance formed within him a character he had never before had! It made Paul a better person. It increased his faith. It sharpened his wisdom. And so he says, "Suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces Character. And Character produces Hope. And hope...hope does not disappoint us!

- Hope sees through the darkness of today into the brilliance of God's tomorrow!
- Hope leaves us expectant and waiting for what's going to come!
- Hope softens our crusty exteriors so that we can drink in the Holy Spirit's new imaginings!
- Hope creates the space for new possibility, for what God is about to accomplish in our world today!

Friends, for the things we cannot bear, the Holy Spirit of truth is working a new thing in us. God is making all things new. And that includes us.

As for the Holy Trinity—we don't need to understand it; we just need to rejoice in it! Amen!