



Daily Faith Practices

Holy Trinity Sunday (A) – 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Focus: *Our Experiences of God*

word of life

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV)

Read 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

This Sunday is Holy Trinity Sunday—a day when the Church celebrates the mystery of the Trinity. It is the one Sunday of the church year where we do not recall an event or a teaching from the life of Jesus; rather we lift up our limited understanding of God in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

1. *How might you explain the Holy Trinity to someone new to the church?*
2. *What images are helpful when describing the Holy Trinity?*
3. *What difficulties are encountered as we attempt to understand and articulate the nature of God?*

Although there is no one event from Scripture serving as a basis for our lessons for today, Holy Trinity Sunday attempts to describe and articulate that which is indescribable and beyond words. It is a day when we affirm the ways we as a community of faith experience the presence of God.

4. *Why is our understanding of the Holy Trinity described as “limited”?*
5. *Why is the Holy Trinity “indescribable and beyond words”?*

The reading for today is the conclusion of Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth. Paul responded earlier in the letter to the news he had heard of the divisions in the community of faith and the challenges posed by some outsiders skilled at oratory and armed with letters of recommendation. (See 2 Corinthians 3:1 and 10:12.) These outsiders challenged Paul’s authority and his message. Their “gospel” was causing division in the church. Paul addresses the divisions in previous chapters and then “brings the message home” in the conclusion of the letter with his final words: “Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11 NRSV) Note: The Greek word translated in 2 Corinthians 13:11 as “farewell” is translated “rejoice” in Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say Rejoice.”

6. *How do you usually conclude a letter to someone dear to you?*
7. *What words of encouragement or advice do you give?*
8. *What is the significance of translating the word “rejoice” rather than “farewell”?*

Paul concludes the letter with a word of blessing and a prayer for the presence of the source of all peace, love, unity, and joy: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV)

Paul writes in a few short phrases the essence of his experiences of God. We use various phrases to articulate that essence: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer; Source of all grace, love, and unity. No matter which phrases or words we use, we know that our words will always be incomplete. Our attempts to describe God will always fall short. For who can truly define the gift of the grace that comes to us through Jesus Christ? Who can truly define the love of God? Who can fully express the communion experienced through the Holy Spirit? Perhaps the best we can do is celebrate the wonderful mystery of God experienced and witnessed in the life of the church, and offer a word of blessing for the grace, love, and communion of God be with each of us. *And also with you.*

9. *When talking about God, what is essential to say?*

word among us

Ricky was never a church-goer. His family never took him to a worship service; in fact, he had never been inside a church building ... until this past Sunday. His best friend Jose invited him to Sunday school and church; and to Jose's surprise, Ricky said, "Yes." They gathered around two big tables that Sunday morning in the young adult class. The lesson was on our experiences of God in our lives and on what it means to be a church. At the end of the class, the leader had everyone turn to 2 Corinthians, divide into groups of two, and pray the blessing to the other from verse 13: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." (2 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV)

1. *Have you ever been offered a word of blessing? What was it like to be blessed by someone else?*
2. *Have you ever offered a word of blessing to someone? What was it like to be the one offering the blessing?*

After Sunday school, Ricky and Jose went into the church for worship. As the service began, Ricky intently tried to follow the liturgy. He was intrigued with the flow of the service and was surprised to see the pastor stand in front of the people and say this word of greeting: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all," (2 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV) to which the congregation replied, "And also with you."

"What a cool way to start!" Ricky whispered to Jose. "To be blessed from the very beginning, and to bless one another – that's cool!"

Yes, we are blessed from the very beginning by God. From the very beginning, when we were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we were blessed to experience the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

3. *What does it mean to you to begin worship with these words of blessing?*
4. *How do these words of blessing describe the Holy Trinity and the nature of God?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful peoples

These words (known as the "apostolic greeting") from Paul's letter to the church in Corinth are spoken at almost every worship service. They are words of blessing—a prayer for each one who gathers. As we live among God's faithful people, we experience God's nature and God's way of relating to us through the gifts of grace, love, and fellowship with one another. And as we receive this blessing, we in turn offer this blessing to one other.

5. *Who in your life continues to bless you with words and actions?*
6. *Who do you hope to bless (by your presence) in the upcoming week?*
7. *How might you be a blessing to strangers during the coming week?*

Prayer

In groups of two, take turns praying the apostolic greeting for one another. Place your hands on the other's head, and pray these words of blessing: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen"

last word

Watch for ways you experience God in your daily life.

Daily Faith Practices

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2014 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/dailyfaithpractices