In the past I’ve used graphics, quotations from the Church Fathers, essays and sermons from theologians and preachers, and more to talk about the Holy Trinity on this, Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost. And regardless of what I’ve employed in that regard, I’ve usually wound up saying something like, “The difficulty in (or impossibility of) understanding or explaining this doctrine may be the point.”

Because God is the ultimate mystery, and any easy or complicated attempt at an explanation seems to underscore that mystery: it will always fall short. If we humans could fully understand God, then that explanation would seem to be proof that either we invented God or that our “complete” understanding is not that at all.

The latter option (inability fully to describe or explain God) appeals to me more than the former, because something greater than ourselves has brought all of this—this universe, and all that is outside or beyond it—into being. You and I and every single person, dog, tree, bacterium that has ever been. So: One God, Three Persons. I’m just not going to dwell on that this morning.

Instead, there is one line in one of the readings that called out to me this time around: a basic truth of our faith. It begins with a negative to highlight the positive significance with which it ends: “Indeed, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

And there we have it—the opposite of a punishing God. Not only that, but here’s the Incarnation, the center of a religion called Christianity, that Christ, the human manifestation of the Divine, is the means whereby that salvation comes to us. The next-to-last line of today’s gospel sets it up: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.” Gave this Son (God’s own self in a single human being) to show us what the love of God looks like when turned loose in the world.

God has made it possible for us to observe and be touched by a fellow human being who confronts life just as every one of us must. And when this incarnate, unstinting, divine love withholds nothing, not even his own life, he leaves this world, just as everyone we love, and we ourselves, must one day.

And then, upon his departure from this world, he promises and sends the Holy Spirit to comfort us, to guide and teach us in the way set forth in Jesus’ life.

And that is the Holy Trinity—not a formula, not a theory or philosophy or doctrine—but the reality of divine love that is on our side. Always.

And this is the story of the lengths to which God has gone and goes to bridge the distance from the creation and Creator of the world to the real challenges and frustrations of living life right here, in Burnet, Texas, in the 21st century.

Wherever our lives take us—geographically, emotionally, and spiritually—God lives here with us now. And teaches us to live in such a way that through us God’s love is made known to others. We, then, are part of the story of the Holy Trinity, here and now.

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