Dance in the Trinity of Holiness

A Sermon Preached by the Rev. Ledlie I. Laughlin

Trinity Sunday ~ June 11, 2023

Perichoresis. Perichoresis. From the Greek, *peri* “around” and *choreo* “make space for” and “contain.” So, to make space around. More specifically, the way in which someone or something makes space around itself for others.

Theologically, perichoresis has been used, especially in the Eastern Orthodox Church, to express God’s mutual indwelling; the intertwining dance of the three persons of the Trinity.

The Trinity is not some distant churchy doctrine; the Trinity is an exuberant articulation of the relational, loving nature of holiness. Most of us began by thinking of God as one Being and then tried to make God into three – Father, Son, Holy Spirit. I want to follow the Church Fathers of the fourth century: to start with the three.

Says Franciscan Richard Rohr, “When we start with the three, we realize God is perfect giving and perfect receiving, which makes communion, extravagant generosity, humble receptivity, and unhindered dialogue the very names of God’s Being. Then we know God as the deepest flow of Life Itself, Relationship Itself. It’s not that a static Divine Being decides to love;love is the very nature and shape of Divine Being*.*” Says Rohr, “God is a centrifugal force, flowing outward and then centripetally drawing all things back into the dance.”

Fascinating as it may be for some to strive and attain to a full understanding of the meaning of the Trinity, I find myself drawn toward the mystery, toward the relational, communal, accessible nature of the God we know in Christ through the testimony of the Spirit.

“Art is so often better at theology than theology is.” wrote poet Christian Wiman. And, “Wonder is the precondition for all wisdom.”

So I invite you to join me in wonder and ask: Is there some way for me to participate, to awaken, Ito join in this dance of the Trinity? In the perichoresis?

On the beach watching, the rhythm of waves, now surging, receding, leaping, crashing, gentle roll of pebbles and shells. The sandpipers run fro and to, then lift as one and alight beyond. A ways out, the fin of a dolphin breaks the surface, disappears, prompts me to wonder of the life beneath, beyond what my eye can see. Is there some way for me to participate, to join the dance?

At a party, a wedding perhaps, the dance is in full swing. I rise from the table, ready. The dancers sail by, move as one; step in, step left, dip down, twirl around, fluid, sensual. Someone beckons as they swirl by, laughing inviting, alluring, but is swept round, disappears beneath the surf.

So, finding the moment, I leap, or think I leapt; for in truth ‘twas already accomplished. I was already in. For did not the dancers, the music, the holiness, first swell and envelop me, the waves lure me in, the pipers and the salt air, the moon and grace irresistible, the love of those around me, the whispering breath of the spirit bid me in? We leap, or merely think we leapt, for in truth ‘twas already accomplished.

Here am I. Here you are. Here we are. In this new day. We have our lives today; our blessings and giftedness; our fears and wounds, our victories, our losses and our loves, fierce convictions, our hearts spilling over, our hopes and dreams. Today perhaps we feel renewed, blessed with clarity, courage, a way forward. Today perhaps we feel bewildered, worn down, seeking comfort, a loving hug. Today perhaps the path is clear, or today we can see only enough – at least enough, thank God – to take the next step. Today perhaps we know less than when we first began, still pensive uncertain if or how or when to leap, toward what or whom.

Even so. Here am I. Here you are. Here we are. Alive, blessed to live and breathe with one another in this moment. It is enough. It is more than enough. It is an abundance. Lavish outpouring. The dancing trinity swirls within, around, beneath and before us.

If we have no ocean waves on the horizon today, we may be drawn with compassion into the cries of those in need or pain, into the struggles of our family or community. Drawn into the cries of our fragile planet, this luminous galaxy, rent by human blindness. Says theologian Kelly Brown Douglas, “If we breathe, then we have no excuse for not conspiring with God to create a more just future where all God’s people can be free from that which would indeed deny their very sacred breath of life.”

Or today we may find ourselves amid the rainbow expressions of gender and orientation. Yesterday’s Pride parade was the fulness of dance – exuberant, flamboyant, humanity – with God in every shout of joy, every tear; each and all as a blessing to every other, in every color and shade of human love and holy light and holy dance.

“We were indeed created in communion, by communion, and for communion. This is what it means in the beginning in the Book of Genesis; we are “created in the image and likeness of God.” This is what it means at the end: go forth and baptize, go forth and live in the name of the Holy Trinity.

Poet Christian Wiman once again:

“My God my bright abyss  
into which all my longing will not go  
once more I come to the edge of all I know  
and believing nothing believe in this.”

Thus, into the surf we leap, into the dance we swirl and twirl, inviting lovers and passers by with our outstretched hands into the dance of the Trinity – Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit; love eternal. Come. Let us go forth. Amen.