

God Is Not Just One Thing
June 4, 2023

I'd like to share a couple of stories with you today. The first is a story about my 2-year-old daughter, Coraline.

Parenting, I've discovered, is the process of stringing together words that you'd never thought would share a sentence. A week ago, I found myself saying to my daughter, "Do not lick the driveway."

A few days ago, it was, "The playground is sleeping right now."

A recently, "Thank you for feeding the baby (who is in Mommy's tummy) acorns."

And then one evening a couple weeks ago, our family was outside after dinner. Cora walked up to a tree and put her cheek on it. And I almost said, "Cora, take your head off of the tree trunk."

But, you know, it wasn't hurting anything. So I held back. And I watched my daughter with the side of her head on the tree trunk, and it looked for anything like she was listening to the tree. And she looked up at me with her ear still to the tree.

I couldn't resist. I put my ear to the trunk of the tree, and I listened. And it was a profound experience.

The first thing I noticed was the warmth of the tree from the evening sun on my cheek. The bark was rough but not unpleasant. And I looked at Cora (her ear still pressed to the trunk) and she looked at me, and she smiled. I imagined what the tree was telling her and telling me: of long, cold winters; of the joy of stretching out its branches in the springtime and putting out flowers and leaves; about the delicious richness of the soil soaked up through its roots.

It was an unexpectedly sacred moment with Cora, myself, and creation. In that moment, that connection, God was there.

A few days later, my wife Becca and I were out in the yard again with Cora. We have a plastic kiddie pool, which was empty at the time. Cora laid down in the dry pool on her back, so that she was looking up at the sky.

Then she patted the pool next to her and said, "Da." When I didn't move, she patted the bottom of the pool a bit more insistently and said, "Daddy."

What could I do? I obliged and sat down in the pool. But she patted the plastic bottom again and said, "Daddy lie down." So of course I did.

Cora and I laid next to each other, and we looked at the clouds. Do you remember the last time you laid on your back and looked at the clouds? The last time I can remember was when I was

maybe 12 years old, and I was with my best friend in his backyard after a summer game of Wiffleball.

But that afternoon, Cora invited me to look at the clouds again. And it offered a kind of peace and serenity, and a unique appreciation for “this fragile earth, our island home,” as we pray in one of our Eucharistic prayers. That sense of appreciation and of togetherness with my daughter, was God.

Last Sunday, we celebrated a Memorial Day service on Sunday after our regular worship. There were national songs, prayers, readings, and then our Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts led us in laying flowers on the graves of the veterans buried in our cemetery.

Throughout the ceremony – both when we were gathered and when we were walking around on our own laying flowers – you couldn’t help feeling the power of the sacrifice that those men and women made. They left their families to go and risk their lives for a cause.

Imagine them hugging their parents or spouses goodbye and heading off to training. Picture them sleeping in tents on the frozen or muddy ground. Picture the boredom, the tedium, and the anxiety of waiting for months on high alert, never knowing when an attack will come. Picture the terror of being fired at.

That is what those soldiers went through for the sake of the freedom of people they loved and people they would never meet. That is what we give thanks for on Memorial Day (and every day, hopefully). That sacrificial love, that willingness to endure all that for the good of others, that is God.

Also that day, I talked with a father who had been awake for several nights previous with his sick child. And though the stakes are lower, that is the same kind of sacred sacrificial love. Sacrificing sleep (and sanity) for your child. That is God.

Yesterday, several people from the St. Gabriel’s community and I met up with other Episcopalians for a Pride Rally in Reading. It seemed like all humanity was there: people from all different races, backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, levels of wealth, hometowns came together.

And the premise was to celebrate the fact that every person is made in the image of God. In our baptismal vows, we are asked, “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” We will, with God’s help. That community, that gathering, that affirmation: is God.

At the same time, Deacon Midge was in Bethlehem, in the Cathedral of the Nativity. Three people who have been studying theology and serving in churches were ordained deacons yesterday. There was joyful singing and celebration and laughter. Deacon Midge proclaimed the Gospel, as she does so well.

During the service, the bishop invited the Holy Spirit to come and rest on those three Candidates. Bishop Kevin and all the priests who were there laid their hands on those three individuals, and

they became deacons in the church of God. That sacred moment, that presence of the Spirit: that is God.

I share all these stories with you today to illustrate a point. It's a point that a colleague of mine shared with me: "The lesson of the Trinity is that God is not just one thing." God shows up in so many different ways.

We see God the creator, who made the heavens and the earth, as we heard in our Genesis reading today. It's powerful, isn't it, to hear the story? To know that God's fingerprint is on every leaf, every robin, every pond. We see God our maker in creation, in listening to trees or looking up at the sky.

We see Jesus the Son in the sacrificial love. In the willingness to give something up in order to improve the lives of others, whether that is a few nights of sleep or our very lives.

And we see the Holy Spirit in community, in gathering together, in action, in worship. In proclaiming that everyone is a child of God and worthy of love. Sometimes we intentionally invite the Holy Spirit to be present with us, to remind us that the Spirit dwells in each of us.

[In just a few minutes, we'll ask the Holy Spirit to sanctify some water that we'll use to baptize Gavyn. And we'll remember how God used water in the Bible. God led the Israelites through the water of the Red Sea to freedom. Jesus was baptized in water by John. And the Holy Spirit moved over the water in the first sentence of Genesis. And by baptizing Gavyn with water, we demonstrate that he is covered by God, surrounded by God. And we, his family of faith, promise to support him throughout his faith journey, to remind Gavyn that God is with him.]

God is not just one thing. This week of Trinity Sunday, I hope you see God show up in a thousand different ways in your life. When God does, take a moment and just to yourself, "This is God."

Amen.

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