



The Shepherd's Staff

***Newsletter of the
Diocese of the Western States***

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The Bishop Morse Youth Camp starts next week, and it is a vital part of our Provincial outreach. I was lucky and went to parochial schools but more importantly, by grace, I was receptive to the work of God the Holy Ghost in my life – even when I was oblivious. In my darkest moments, I never doubted God; I took his divine providence as a fact of life. As I got older, I swam the Tiber and became an Episcopalian, just as the PECUSA was in the process of committing ecclesiastical suicide in abandoning the Faith once delivered to the Saints. I was asked to study for the diaconate in 1977 and then given my first challenge. My Rector asked me to stop assisting at the altar (I was a great M/C) and take over the Sunday School. I didn't like the idea of change but, as time went by, I understood that the ministry is not just about liturgy but about ministering; and most importantly, ministering to our children.

I remember that Bishop Morse once said that the purpose of a priest (or deacon) is to bring people to Jesus Christ. From the onset of the old Diocese of Christ the King, youth camps were an important function of our diocese; and later our province. I know forty-year-olds who went to the old camps. Some have stayed with the Church; some have not. Some of those friendships remain in bloom! But the purpose of our camps is to increase the odds that more youth will stay with and in the church through the challenges of their lives. Very few things hurt more than to hear that so-in-so (once a bright happy camper) is no longer attending church! I am deeply grateful to the clergy and laity who try to help reduce these unhappy reports. I am also deeply grateful to the Anglican Church Women, the Diocese of the Atlantic States and many parishes which help to support the youth camp. THANK YOU!!!

A week after camp ends, our Seminary Summer Session begins. As the youth camp is designed to minister to the youth of the Province, the Summer Session is designed to help men prepare for the sacred ministry. The preparation for ordination is rigorous both on the postulant and his family. But our new deacons and priest are crucial for the continuation of our Province. We must minister to all ages, from children to the elderly; and for a minister, there really is no retirement. There is no quitting! Maybe a slowdown in physical activities but a priest is a priest forever. Sometimes the most influential and pastoral clergy are the retired priests and deacons, who assist in a parish but still give example, teach and live the Gospel of Christ. Summer Session with corporate worship and academic challenges are our principal training ground for the future.

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A Sermon for Trinity Sunday

There is a story that St. Augustine was walking on the beach in North Africa, contemplating the mystery of the Trinity. Then he saw a boy in front of him who had dug a hole in the sand and was going out to the sea again and again and bringing water to pour into the hole. St. Augustine asked him, "What are you doing?" "I'm going to pour the entire ocean into this hole." "That is impossible, the whole ocean will not fit in the hole you have made" said St. Augustine. The boy replied, "And you cannot fit the mystery of the Trinity in your tiny little brain." The story concludes by stating that the boy vanished because St. Augustine had been talking to an angel.

Long ago, when Ireland was the land of Druids, there was a great and holy Bishop, Patrick, who came from Roman Britain to preach the word of God. St. Patrick was a great teacher and built many churches. He was well-loved and performed miracles. One day, however, a group of his followers came to him and told him that it was difficult to understand the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. St. Patrick reflected a moment and then, stooping down, he plucked a shamrock and held it before them, showing to them a living example of "Three-in-One." St. Patrick used the shamrock to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The simple beauty of this explanation convinced these skeptics, and from that day the shamrock has been revered throughout Ireland.

I could tell more stories, like Monsignor Quixote (in the Graham Greene novel) comparing three bottles of wine, fermented from the same grape on the same day in three equal bottles; *he who partakes of one, partakes of all three*. Or a storyteller who used the example of braided hair. It takes three strands to make one braid – do it minus the one and the remaining two don't hold. But what really needs to be accomplished after trying to explain the mystery of the Trinity is to understand the importance of why it is important to believe in the Trinity. C. B. Moss gives three reasons: because God is love; because God's life is social; and because the Incarnation and the Atonement depend on the Trinity.

God is love! Love must have an object. Even self-love has an object. But in the Trinity, the Father's love begot the Son and the love between the Father and the Son sends forth the Holy Spirit. Moreover, God's love is so abundant (beyond human understanding) that God also loves his creation.

God is social! The fact that we, who are created in the image of God, are social creatures is but a reflection of the social relationship of the Trinity. And since self-sacrifice is the highest action of man's nobility that too is a reflection of the Trinity as each person of the Trinity eternally offers himself eternally to the other two.

No Trinity means NO Incarnation and NO Atonement! *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. God became our flesh and died for us; He rose from death and gives us everlasting life. But without the Trinity, these facts could never have taken place.

Trinity Sunday is the day we celebrate these fundamental truths on which our faith is built. Trinity Sunday is our great Feast of Orthodoxy: the ultimate revelation of what God is throughout all eternity. In the Gospel, the spiritual rebirth made possible by the Incarnation and Atonement is contrasted with an older faith by him who descended from heaven and ascended into heaven. The Epistle is a vision of the New Jerusalem and the endless praise of the Trinity by the created – both angels and men. And the Collect states the importance of the Trinity and echoes today's Preface: *Who, with thine only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, art one God, one Lord, in Trinity of Persons and in Unity of Substance. For that which we believe of thy glory, O Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference of inequality*.