

Holy Trinity A & Confirmation 2026 ~ Matthew 28:16-20

Fourteen years ago today, I was preaching my trial sermon to be called as pastor to serve my first congregation. Although most new seminary graduates are eager for ordination, nobody wants to preach their make-it-or-break-it sermon on Holy Trinity Sunday. It's intimidating enough, trying to sound like you know what you're talking about, while not sounding too boring, without having to do it on the day when the church celebrates the mystery of one God in trinity, and the Trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence...not three eternal beings, but one eternal being... all three persons in themselves coeternal and coequal, yet one...Not to spoil it for you, but we can't explain the Trinity. So, for the record, we did not pick today for Confirmation Sunday because our confirmands have done such a good job learning the catechism that they can now explain how the Triune God is three distinct persons yet only one deity. That is not their final requirement this morning, because they have studied the creed, but just like every generation before them, they have *not* come to a complete and perfect understanding of the One Great Infinite Being.

But here's what they have done: they have read Holy Scripture and asked good, deep questions about it. They have memorized parts of the nativity story and have acted it out for you and everyone in town who has come over the years to Journey to Bethlehem. They have rehearsed together and have made a joyful noise with instruments and hand-bells and that one time that they learned to play Feliz Navidad with boom whackers. They have traveled to State College, Huntingdon, Sequanota, Washington, and Florida to connect with the wider church and the wider world. They have put on aprons and served dinners here at church; they have put on Halloween costumes and entertained the elderly at the Lutheran Home; they have put on robes and served God and our congregation in worship. They have slept in the pews and hidden in the basement and made a lot of really good peppermint bark. They have lived into the community here and become the body of Christ.

But they haven't gotten God all figured out, nor have we. Then again, Matthew tells us that even Jesus' closest disciples didn't fully understand God when God was standing right in front of them: After all the years watching Jesus teach and preach and heal, after seeing him crucified and resurrected, even still, *They worshipped him, but they doubted.* The disciples modeled for us the life-long work of worshipping even as we struggle with what we do not understand; our job isn't to define, explain, or understand

the mystery of God—it's to worship the God whom we cannot see and to invite others to be part of the family of God that we *can* see. Confirmation might mean the end of catechism class, but it should not be the end of growth in relationship to the God who made the heavens and the earth and us. Quite the opposite, it is the commitment to ask even more questions, to keep wrestling with doubts, to continue worshipping in community, and to keep learning how God is calling us to faithful living in all of life's changing circumstances.

When the eleven disciples doubted, Jesus didn't give them all the answers or send them back to school; he sent them out to all the nations to baptize and to teach what he had commanded, which, we remember, was to love one another as he had loved them. Jesus refrained from giving a long, convoluted, boring sermon about the nature of the Trinity: he just told them to go in the name of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to include more and more people in the community that he started with that bunch of fishermen from Galilee. We cannot fathom the mystery of the Triune God, but what we can say about God is that the Trinity is a community: God is in relationship even within God's own self. If we want to be disciples of the God who is by nature, relational, orienting ourselves towards others is the way to go.

Confirmation is not what makes this group of young people part of the church community; God did that for them in baptism. But affirmation of baptism, which is really what confirmation is and what we all will do together with them today, is a public commitment to continue participating in the life of the church, to remain in relationship with other members of the body of Christ. It's a promise we make to love one another because Jesus loved us. It's a resolution to make faith not just about us and God but about us and the community of God's other beloved children.

Unfortunately, the church is made up of people, and therefore imperfect. Even in the Lord's own house, we don't always reflect very clearly the light and love of Christ who gathered us into this community and made us one family in the waters of baptism. But God who, as an eternal relationship, is never alone does not leave us alone: *Good luck trying to be the church.* No, instead, God inspires our life together: *Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age...* The community that we are called to build together is sustained by the Spirit of God who made us and claimed us and refuses to leave our side. Thanks be to the God of majesty, and mystery, and love who makes us one, for one another and for the sake of the world.