

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

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Reflection by Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB

Prv 8:22-31; Rom 5:1-5; Jn 16:12-15

Would you indulge me for a couple of minutes, please? Think for a minute – and I’m going to give you a whole minute in which to do so – about being little and playing. What did you do? Who were you with? What made it play? OK, go. [time]

Now, I hope you’ll indulge me a little more and go sit by somebody or a couple of somebodies near you and tell them about playing – and listen to them do the same. [time]

Now, stay where you are for a little bit longer, please. This time think about watching children playing. Try to recall a specific time or two. Hilary may have an advantage here. What is that like? What do you see and hear? How do you feel? [time] Tell your conversation partners about that.

Thank you for your indulgence.

I got to thinking about playing – you’re smart enough to figure out – through spending some time with the first reading from Proverbs. The *Collegeville Bible Commentary* calls verse 30 the key verse, and what really captured me about it is that there’s some linguistic ambiguity about it. Our translation puts these words in the mouth of Wisdom: “Then was I beside him as his craftsman.” Translators have to make a decision about that last word. It can be craftsman or artisan; we see Wisdom, there from the beginning, helping to bring Creation into being, ordering the universe. But translators also acknowledge that the word could be “little child,” a choice that makes abundant sense with the images of birth that come before it (verse 23, “From of old, I was poured forth”) and the images of play that come after it (verse 31, “playing before God, all the while, playing on the surface of the earth”).

For me this was a revelation. I’ve always loved thinking about the relationality of the Trinity, of the model of living community that our God is. But to think of the Trinity as God-at-play – and in the mystery of the Godhead, delighting in the play of others . . . Well, that was new.

Whether we name God as Father/Son/Spirit or Creator/Redeemer/Sanctifier or any other Trinitarian formula we come up with, part of the interaction between the three persons is play. It is love and delight and charm and joy.

And we – as creation, church, community, individuals – are products of that play. We are objects of divine delight. I want to hold onto that fact – in the midst of so much darkness and doubt and fear and worry – because then maybe I will act like it. Maybe it will shape the way I see the world and all who share it with me.

Proverbs 30 and 31:

Wisdom says, “There was I beside God as his little child, and I was her delight day by day/Playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of her earth/having my delight with human beings.”

What do these thought experiments have to teach about the Trinity? What binds the Trinity together – and to us – is love and wonder and delight. Fun!