



Trinity Sunday/Memorial Day Weekend
5/30/21 - Holy Eucharist Rite II for the First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity
Sunday
The Reverend Nick Morris-Kliment
Christ Episcopal Church, Needham, MA

O Lord: Take our minds and think through them; take our mouths and speak through them; take our hearts and set them on fire. Amen.

It has been something of a week about memory and complex feelings for me.

Part of this is that my older child is graduating from high school, and so it's been natural to look back over our lives together thus far. So that's a little bittersweet: I feel joy at the accomplishments, and sadness at the receding pleasures of being the parent of a child.

Part of it is, as pandemic restrictions are lifted, I've looked back at what has happened over the last 15 months. It feels a bit like when a part of our body has been numb, and the feeling starts to come back, and we're glad about that, but it also hurts. I feel sorrow about the many dead, and survivors suffering from the lingering effects, and uncertainty about what the future will hold—for our communities and our Church.

My feelings also have to do with race relations: last week was the one-year anniversary of the killing of George Floyd; this coming week, there is the centennial of the Tulsa Massacre of 1921, which decimated the black community of Tulsa, killing 100s of black people, and practically obliterating 35 square blocks of their community there. So, I'm feeling some hope in light of the activism unleashed by Floyd's death, as well as anger and shame about parts of our history.

And then there is the commemoration of Memorial Day. Out of the horror of hundreds of thousands of Union and Confederate dead in the Civil War, came the impulse to remember our soldiers who have fallen in every conflict since then. I'm feeling sadness and grief about what seems like the inevitability of war and waste of human life, as well as inspiration from the courage and capacity for sacrifice of which we are capable. And I'm aware of those in our community of faith who know the pain and sorrow of losing a loved one to war.

Memory is complex.

Our Scriptures are saturated with memory. They are in a real sense the collective memory of the experiences of our ancestors in faith. The Scriptures attempt to capture their experience of God as both transcendent and immanent, as both out there and right here.

This morning, the Prophet Isaiah shows us how he is both overwhelmed by God's vastness and by the personal invitation—"Whom shall I send?"

The Psalmist marvels at God's spectacular powers of creation and destruction, as well God's ability to speak personally to his people.



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Paul calls the Creator of the universe, in essence, “Daddy,” and revels in the creation, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of a family of children of God, with Christ as our brother.

In John, Jesus refers directly to the presence of the Spirit, indirectly to God the Father, and to himself as the Son of Man.

Amidst the intense theological reflection of the first four centuries of the Christian church, these records of the concrete, lived experiences of God *as a relational being* were some of the raw materials giving rise to the rather abstract Doctrine of the Trinity. By the twelfthth century, thanks to Thomas Becket, one of our Archbishops of Canterbury, a holy day in honor of the Trinity began to spread throughout Western Christianity.

That tradition of worship, arising out of the collective memory of the experience of awe of the Creator; the experience of intimacy with God in the face of Jesus; and the experience of the intimate presence of an indwelling, enlivening Spirit; all these undergird the doctrine of the Trinity.

The thing about memory is that it helps us to *re-member* past experience, to try to make sense of it. And remembering allows us to begin to heal the past and live into a more wholesome future by calling on God’s Trinitarian nature. We call on God’s help when we celebrate the Eucharist, as we give thanks to God, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, and proclaim that Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

All the experiences that live in our memories, the good and the bad, the painful and the pleasurable, we bring to God. Our God is dynamic; not static, but relational. Our God moves within us and in the world. This is God who created us and all things, who in Jesus shows us how to live in right relationship with one another and all creation, and who comforts and strengthens by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We recall the sacrifices of our soldiers; we commemorate the extended burdens and gifts of COVID-tide; we look back on racial injustice and do not avert our eyes from its continuing effects; so that we can remember all of this in the light of God’s love and hope for us, so that we can be agents of healing and hope.

God has acted in the past; God is acting now; God will act in the future. God is acting in us, through us, and for us.

Amen.