

## Trinity Sunday

**John 3:16 is the most quoted verse in the bible. You see those numbers on bumper stickers in parking lots and placards at sporting events. Today it opens the gospel passage for Trinity Sunday: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” In this simple way Christians announce to the broader population the promise of faith. You can have eternal life if you believe in the only Son of God.**

**It carries a beautiful thought, but it also carries a veiled threat: If you believe, you won't perish. The next verses are not so veiled: “whoever does not believe has already been condemned.” That warning could contribute to the popularity of this verse because it makes people who otherwise feel powerless suddenly feel strong, like the way one child might tell another, “My dad can whip you.” Quoting this verse, believers can say, “Don't take my word for it; it's God's word, and God will punish those who don't believe.”**

**Any good father doesn't want the reputation for being a threat. Good fathers are loving, and they'd prefer to be known for that. I'm sure it's the same for God the Father. Fathers care for their children; children rely on their fathers. Fathers set boundaries and punishments for children, but they hope their children will recognize the love that lingers beyond those limits.**

**The full meaning of John 3:16 is breathtaking. It promises eternal life to believers, and it states that this is why Jesus came into the world - to offer us eternal life. The Son did not come on his own - the Father sent the Son. Why did the Father do this? To correct people? To keep them in line? To assert authority? No, and this is what can cause this verse to make your heart stop: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.”**

**This weekend our celebration of Trinity Sunday coincides with Father's Day. It gives Fathers one way to reflect on their responsibilities. Their first job is to love. Their second job is to send children into the world to share the news of eternal life. Fathers have to set rules for what children can and cannot do, and they have to follow up with consequences if the kids do not obey. Not everybody gets a responsible father; some people have to learn the rules of life through other means. It's not impossible, but it is harder. How good it is for all of us that Jesus taught us to call God our Father; it's the word he used when praying, and he entrusted it to us as well.**

**Whoever we are and whatever our responsibilities are, we can learn the right way to act from the example of God the Father. He sent a messenger of life into the world, and he did it out of love.**