

Most Holy Trinity

The surprise in today's gospel is the way Matthew describes the eleven apostles remaining after the death of Judas. Jesus had ordered them to gather on a mountain in Galilee, and when they saw him, risen from the dead in the last moments before his ascension, Matthew says this about the eleven men who knew Jesus best: "they worshiped, but they doubted."

Those few words raise many questions. Is it the same "they"—are those who worshiped also those who doubted? Or were they two groups of apostles? What exactly did the doubters doubt? That Jesus was really there standing before them alive? That worship was the right thing to do? Or did it just mean they couldn't make sense of this?

There are days any of us cannot make sense of God. Some feelings of doubt, hesitation, and puzzlement are normal for anyone who believes. That is no surprise. Those feelings help explain why we use the word "believe" in reference to God. Our Creed is a concise summary of the faith first formalized at the Council of Nicaea and polished at the Council of Constantinople. Seventeen hundred years later we are still professing the same faith. We may not fully understand everything it contains, but we believe it.

The word "believe" in the creed is specialized. Take the first line, for example. We believe that there is one God, but the word "believe" there means something more. In the creed we say we believe *in* God. We trust God. We center our lives on God. We are not simply declaring an article of faith that God exists, but an article of orientation. Because I believe in God, I live the way I do. You may have questions or doubts about any important person in your life, the company for which you work, or the church where you belong. But you believe in them; you make decisions because of them. They complement who you are.

On Trinity Sunday we celebrate God and our belief in God. We sign ourselves in the name of the Trinity. We conclude significant prayers to the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. We baptize in the name of the Trinity as Jesus commanded in this gospel.

At the end of his life, Jesus asked even more than belief in him. He sent the eleven out to all the nations to baptize and teach others to observe what he commanded. He wasn't content with people who could explain what Christians believe; he wanted people to live as Christians live.

Jesus asked a lot: tell other people about him, invite them to receive baptism, and ask them to order their lives around him as we do. But Jesus said something comforting at the end, something that helps us do what he asked: "behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." One of my scripture professors in the seminary told our class he could sum up the main message of the entire bible in just four words: "God is with us." You see it in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. You see it in the promise of Emmanuel, a name that means "God-is-with-us." You see it at the end of Matthew's gospel in the passage we heard today. And the Book of Revelation proclaims that God's dwelling place is among his people. God is with us. He is with us when we invite and when we challenge, when we worship and when we doubt. God is with us.

Sunday, May 30, 2021