

Ignorance Doesn't Make Stuff Not Exist Trinity, Year C

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, May 26, 2013

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set on fire with love for thee. Amen.

“Ignorance doesn't make stuff not exist.” I heard that somewhere in my studies this week, and as a basic statement of why we're here this morning, I really like it. “Ignorance doesn't make stuff not exist.” Basically, just because you don't understand something, doesn't mean it's not true. As a matter of fact, I think it's worth us all committing to memory as our motto for this Trinity Sunday. Say it with me a couple of times... “Ignorance doesn't make stuff not exist.” “Ignorance doesn't make stuff not exist.” Good.

Now, everyone's heard that pigs are very bright creatures. But the story is told about one famous pig who was *really* extraordinary. Arnold the pig – this wasn't that other famous pig, that one from *Green Acres* – in the words of that other famous pig story, *this* Arnold was “some pig.” Early on, it was obvious that he had real promise, and because of his exceptional talents, he was able to be educated at one of our prestigious private schools and then went on to university on full scholarship. To avoid any of the usual school rivalries, I won't say which schools he attended, but all along the way, he distinguished himself as a credit to the whole porcine world.

By the time Arnold was a fully grown hog, he spoke eight languages, including Latin. I know what you're thinking, but Arnold spoke *real* Latin, though people frequently commented that they didn't know why he bothered learning a dead language in the first place. He was sometimes asked to lecture on the subject of particle physics, since he was the author of a prominent corollary of string theory. On occasion he consulted with NASA because, though everyone knows that pigs don't fly, *this* one had become an expert in rocket science. He would have taken up brain surgery, too, if it hadn't been for... well, *hooves*. Oh well.

Arnold's real love, though, was his art. Even with his piggy feet, he produced some of the most wonderful sculpture anyone had ever seen. Since he was so well traveled, he collected pieces of wood and metal from all over the world and incorporated them into assemblages that in some abstract way focused people's intellectual and emotional energy in incredibly powerful ways. The one time he agreed to let one of his pieces be offered for sale, it went at auction for over a *million* dollars. Arnold gave the proceeds to charity, of course.

One day Arnold was out in the woods, thinking his deep thoughts and collecting material for a new installation piece, when he met a family from a little town in... oh, let's say upper Mississippi. They had been traveling for days and had somehow gotten turned around on one of the back roads. Seeing Arnold the pig rutting around in the woods for just the right piece of weathered wood for his project, the father of the family snapped his fingers and clucked his tongue and said, “Hey there, piggy, piggy. Whatcha doin' out here in the woods?”

Boy, were *they* surprised when Arnold explained – in English. (Arnold didn't know much Mississippi) Arnold explained to his guests that he was experimenting with the visual impact of counterbalanced forces using found objects. He invited the family back to see his progress, and as they followed him, he explained the existential tension that he was trying to capture in his work. When they got back to Arnold's workspace, they gathered around the magnificent creation, and for a *long* while they all stood there looking at his work in silence. Finally, the dad shrugged and turned to his family, saying, “I don't know much about art, but I know what I *like*.”

So they killed the pig, and ate him for breakfast.

Now what's our motto for today? “Ignorance doesn't make stuff not exist.” That's right.

Sometimes people can't deal with things they don't understand. They can't deal with the tension of not understanding. So, sometimes they just throw their hands up in the air and pretend that it isn't there

at all. Sometimes, maybe they cloud it up with complicated language and sophisticated concepts and pretend like they have it all figured out, and conclude that everyone else is either too ignorant to be bothered with, or worse yet, that they are evil and deserve to be destroyed. Or sometimes, maybe they just dumb everything down to the simplest common denominator – and then just eat it.

One of the reasons I really like being an Episcopalian is that, in general, we are usually willing to just *live* with tension. As a group, we're usually willing to live with confusion, even contradiction. At our best, we not only live with mystery, we seem to *delight* in it. More times than not, we Episcopalians *revel* in the assumption that we *don't* have everything figured out, that we *don't* have a neat, three-word answer to every question. After all, what's our motto? "Ignorance doesn't make stuff not exist."

The question of the Trinity that we celebrate at least this one Sunday every year is like that. On one level, the doctrine of the Trinity is a construct of the Church, to say more about who God is *not*. The God defined by the doctrine of the Trinity is not many gods, but *one* God. He is not in competition, he is not in disagreement, he is not changeable. The doctrine of the Trinity denies that the Father takes a hands-off approach, pointing instead to a Creator who has always been, and continues to be, *involved* in all creation – involved in *particular*, with the human race. The doctrine of the Trinity points to a Christ who isn't some sort of personal pal, without regard to real truth or ultimate righteousness, but nothing short of the eternal Son of God. The doctrine of the Trinity defines a Holy Spirit of power, not a rabbit that pops out of our magic hat anytime we call, but the one who moved at the beginning of creation and continues to enliven the Church today.

But *beyond* the doctrine, the real *truth*, the existential *substance*, the *mystery* of the Trinity, is that God, from the very beginning, from *before* the beginning, was in *relationship*. The Trinity tells us the truth that God is not, and never has been, alone. The Trinity insists that God is, and ever has been, in perfect communication, in perfect conversation, in perfect *communion* with and *within* God's self. In the very essence of what we mean when we *say* God, at the very core of what we mean when we *pray* God, the very essence of who God *is*, has always been, and always is, and always will be... *love* itself. I like being an Episcopalian, because in saying *that*, the doctrine of the Trinity speaks volumes about who *God* is, and why God should find *us* so incredibly important.

You see, we worship a God who creates not for something to do, but so that the relationship that defines God's essence can permeate the entire universe. We come before a God who went to incomprehensible lengths to buy us back to himself, not as *quid pro quo* for good behavior, but because the greatest wound that the Creator of the universe can sustain, is the fact that we so consistently turn our backs on him. We serve a God who sustains, not because he owes us something or because of our sniveling and whining, but because God *cares* for us, because God *values* us, because the God of love loves *you* and loves *me*. We celebrate the Feast of the Trinity today not just because the Church has been saved from the heresies of the past and the presumptions of the present by some abstract Doctrine of the Trinity. We celebrate the Trinity today because we are invited to be part of the love that God has experienced *forever*, a love that can invigorate us and enliven us and empower us to reach beyond ourselves, to invite *every* creature beloved of God to experience the peace, and the joy, and the love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Remember our motto, "Ignorance doesn't make stuff not exist." Oh, and... watch where you get your bacon!