

A college class was led by an atheist professor, and every day he'd stand in front of his class and say, "Have you ever seen God?" to which nobody would answer. Then he'd ask, "Have you ever felt God?" and nobody would answer. Finally he'd ask, "Have you ever heard God?" and, like the other times, nobody would answer. He then would say, "It is obvious that there is no God."

One day a Christian student had been having an extremely bad day; her car broke down, her mother was sick, her boyfriend was out of town, and she'd gotten a bad grade on one of her exams. She had been fed up with her professor's little act every morning, so she decided to do something about it.

While the professor stood up at the beginning of class and did his thing, the student had an idea. She got up and said, "Professor, would you mind if I said something?" He said, "Of course not. This is an expressive classroom, and I think it would be fine if you spoke your mind."

The girl said to the class, "Have you ever seen our professor's brain?" and nobody answered. Then she asked, "Have you ever felt our professor's brain?" and nobody answered. Finally she asked, "Have you ever heard our professor's brain?" and, like the other times, nobody answered.

She then said, "It is quite obvious that our professor has no brain."

Holy Mysteries

This first Sunday after Pentecost is considered to be Trinity Sunday. In the early days of the church, Christians began to realize that God, who sent Jesus that we might know God in our lives, also sent the Holy Spirit to live and move among us. In the life of the church today, once Pentecost has come and the Holy Spirit has "officially" been sent into the world, Christians can celebrate what we call the "three persons of the Trinity." This is all very logical...a bit like the class who reasoned out that the professor had no brain.

The challenge is that faith is not always reasonable. We can lose faith at the slightest mishap – or we may keep the faith in the midst of insurmountable devastation. There is no logic to it. Yet since the beginning of recorded time, we humans have attempted to reason out the How and the Why of things – even though there are some things we just *know*. The gospels tell us of miraculous appearances of Jesus *after* he was crucified and rose to heaven. It was one of those appearances in which Matthew quotes Jesus telling his followers to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . ."

How could it be that Jesus appeared? The logical mind wants proof. We could search all sorts of historical documents for empirical data – but sometimes in our faith we simply *know*.

Bill Cosby once hosted a comedy series called, "Kids Say the Darndest Things." It was a hit back in 1995. In one episode he asked young Brandon Wolf, "have you ever seen your parents make a romantic move?" and Brandon said, "They kiss." "Well, do they love each other?" "They have to", Brandon said. "So is it a religious thing?" Brandon replied: "Well, we're Jewish..." Of course there was a lot of laughter. Brandon as a 6 or 7 year-old knew that at the heart of his family was love.

At the heart of the creation story is the understanding of a loving God whose Spirit hovers over the waters and causes the world to come into being. Once everything is set in motion that same God creates humankind in

God's image...male and female they are created. The story that starts, "In the beginning..." employed the imaginations and the reasoning of the earliest people who attempted to answer the mysteries of "how" and "why." But deep inside they just *knew* there was something, some force, some being that brought the world into existence.

Do you ever have that same sense – there are some things you just *know*? You *know* how you feel . . . sad, mad, happy, fear, or love. It's not something you can explain. It simply is. That is what the four young women knew when they chose to join our church last Sunday. They shared their statements of faith about what they knew – and what they didn't. That speaks volumes about the kind of faith community we have here – it's okay to ask questions and to doubt. Here we are all searching for answers to life's persistent questions. That's why I was reminded of the show, "Kids Say the Darndest Things."

Kids do say the darndest things...and ask the darndest questions. Anyone who has ever taught Sunday School can tell you they get stumped on a regular basis. The beauty of that setting is that a child's question can make us take a new look at our own faith and beliefs. Centuries ago, the questions and doubts our confirmands expressed could have been heretical. In fact, many churches today would correct them and tell them what they must believe. Let me remind you of some things that were stated:

"We, as Christians, should learn from the Bible, but not take every story literally."

"I believe that God cannot speak directly to us, but can give out signs that he is there and is watching over us."

". . . is Jesus God or the son of God? Is the holy spirit another piece of God or something totally different?"

This last question is a centuries old question – debated by wise scholars who wrote page after page of logical debate about the nature of God. But when Jesus said to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit he set forth a formula that has sparked arguments through the ages. One God – three persons. Theological debates raged about how God could be One and yet three. My children's sermon helps us to get a logical grasp on how this could be – Water, H₂O, can exist in solid, liquid and gaseous form, yet in all forms it is water.

Well, here is an adult version of that illustration. We know God because we were created in God's image. We know God bodily and spiritually. One of my favorite theologians, Frederick Buechner explains it this way:

"If the idea of God as both Three and One seems farfetched and obfuscating, look in the mirror some day. There is (a) the interior life known only to yourself and those you choose to community it to (the Father). There is (b) the visible face [and body] which in some measure reflects that inner life (the Son). And there is (c) the invisible power you have which enables you to communicate that interior life in such a way that others do not merely know *about* it but know it in the sense of its becoming part of who they are (the Holy Spirit). Yet what you are looking at in your mirror is clearly and indivisibly the one and only you." (Buechner)

Father, Son and Holy Spirit – along with the miraculous works of Jesus, the virgin birth, the appearances of the crucified Christ, and even creation – are all Holy Mysteries. Try as we might to explain them and miserably fail, they are there. Just as you and I are here...just as you and I know love. We can't explain it, really. We simply *know*.

They wanted to join the church because they knew it was in a community of faith they could continue to ask questions, seek, learn and grow.