

The Dance of Trinity



Today's Scriptures all point to the Trinity, even though the word itself isn't in the Bible.

Genesis 1:1-2:4 Six centuries before Jesus was born, an unknown poet-priest imagined God at the beginning of time: hovering over the void, creating life out of chaos. Sun, moon, and stars are born; the earth is formed, with its mountains and seas; plants spring up, animals begin to roam the earth, and human beings are created. When we read this particular verse (*Genesis 1:26*), we hear God saying that we are made in the divine image – but we often fail to notice that God is speaking in the plural voice: *Let us make humankind in our image*. Here, in the first chapter of the Bible, is the God of Trinity.

1 Corinthians 12:1-13:13 In the first century, St. Paul used a powerful metaphor to describe the church – he called it the body of Christ, where each member of the body contributes to the life of the whole. But there's another metaphor in this passage, a metaphor which may be even more helpful to us as we try to understand the Trinity: *Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries, but the same Lord; and there are different energies, but the same God, operating in everything*. The Greek word Paul used was **energeia** (which is the root for our own word “energy”). Paul can use the metaphor of the body, and speak of the divine energy that flows through it, because the Corinthians are already experiencing the energy of God's Spirit moving through them. This passage ends with its most famous sentence and its major point: *Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)* The word for this **energeia**, in every language, is Love; and the Christian word for the **energeia** of Love is Trinity.

The early church: By the fourth century, Eastern theologians had found another metaphor to describe how God's energy works: **perichoresis** (a word we can loosely

translate as “circling around”, and the root for our own word, “choreography”). If you ever saw the movie, “Zorba the Greek”, you’ve seen a **perichoresis** – because modern Greeks still use the same word for their ancient folk dance. In **perichoresis** the dancers join hands and move in a circle, stepping faster and faster as the music speeds up – until, watching from the sidelines, by-standers can no longer see individual dancers, only the moving energy of the whole circle. Searching for a metaphor to describe God’s nature and activity, the Eastern theologians looked at **perichoresis** and said, “That’s what the Trinity is like.”

The Trinity is a harmonious set of relationships bound together by the energy of love. But the Trinity is not consumed by its own life and relationships; Trinity moves *in* the world, and acts *on* the world, sharing its energy *with* the world. So look again – within this relationship of love – within the embrace of Creator, Spirit and Jesus – there is more room. There is space for everyone, even for a whole cosmos. No one needs to be on the sidelines of the Trinity – all are invited to join the dance.



[There's room for all of us here....](#)

Everyone who has ever loved someone knows this dance of love. Whenever we love, whoever we love – whether a baby, a parent; a beloved friend, a spouse; a neighbor or co-worker – we are connecting deeply with that person. We share our life’s energy with them; we dance alongside them. And often, when we love, our love becomes so deep and so full that it spills over into the lives of our families and friends, and they dance along with us. Whenever we truly love, we invite new people into the dance. That’s **perichoresis**, and that’s how the Trinity works.

Come join the dance!

There’s an Episcopal Church in San Francisco that feels in many ways like a Greek church, and it has a Greek name – Sr. Gregory of Nyssa.

St. Gregory's is never empty. Around its upper walls of St. Gregory's there is a parade of saints, each participating in the never-ending dance. These saints come from every century of the church.



<http://www.saintgregorys.org/saints-by-name.html>

On Sundays at St. Gregory's we find the congregation, today's dancing saints, circling the altar as they worship. These saints come from every part of San Francisco, and beyond.



<http://www.saintgregorys.org/>

On Fridays at St. Gregory's we find members of the congregation again, now circling the altar to distribute food to the neighborhood.



<http://www.saintgregorys.org/videos.html>

What a powerful demonstration of God's love for all – and what a powerful metaphor for the God of Trinity!

But you don't have to go to San Francisco to join this dance. The dancing God of Trinity is found wherever there are communities of people joined together in the dance of love, moving together, using the energy of love for peace, harmony, and justice.

The dancing God of Trinity leads us to pour out our love for each other, just as the Creator, Son and Spirit share their mutual love. When the God of Trinity leads us in the dance, every member of the community has equal worth and equal place. No one is left out, and others are always invited in.

If God is a dancing community, so is St. Benedict's, Los Osos! The dancing God of Trinity – joyful, dynamic, interactive, sharing, loving, serving – provides the model for our own dance. Every Sunday we come together to practice **perichoresis**. When Sunday's music comes to an end, we are sent forth to dance in the world – to bring healing and hope to others, and to invite others to join the dance.

So once again, as we do every Sunday, let's join the dance of Trinity:

Come, join the dance of Trinity, before all worlds begun –
the interweaving of the Three: Creator, Spirit, Son.
The universe of space and time did not arise by chance,
but as the Three, in love and hope, made room within their dance.

Come, see the face of Trinity, new-born in Bethlehem;
then bloodied by a crown of thorns outside Jerusalem.
The dance of Trinity is meant for human flesh and bone;
when fear confines the dance in death, God rolls away the stone.

Come, speak aloud of Trinity, as wind and tongues of flame
set people free at Pentecost to tell the Savior's name.

We know the yoke of sin and death, our necks have worn it smooth;
go tell the world of weight and woe that we are free to move!

Within the dance of Trinity, before all worlds begun,
we sing the praises of the Three: Creator, Spirit, Son.
Let voices rise and interweave, by love and hope set free,
to shape in song this joy, this life: the dance of Trinity.

Text: Richard Leach, 2001 Music: Kingsfold

To hear the music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQ55zGuti04>