



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Holy Trinity Sunday (B) – Romans 8:12-17

Focus: *Life in the Spirit*

word of life

“When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs” Romans 8:15b-16 (NRSV)

Read Romans 8:12-17

Holy Trinity Sunday is the one occasion in the church year that emphasizes not an event or teaching in the life of Jesus; rather, Holy Trinity Sunday celebrates a doctrine of the Church – the mystery of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three “persons” of the Trinity are mentioned in this passage from Romans: Abba, Father (vs. 15); Jesus, the Christ (vs. 17); and the Holy Spirit (vs. 14, 16).

1. *How have you heard the doctrine of the Trinity explained?*
2. *What is your understanding of the Trinity?*

The temptation on this Sunday is to try to explain who the Trinity **is**. But the task on this day is to try to explain what the God of the Trinity **does** and what impact God’s action has to bring new life and a new relationship with God and with others. The apostle Paul gives us in these verses a concise description of the life-giving acts of God as experienced by the followers of Jesus.

3. *How would you describe your experience of God in your life?*
4. *What impact does God’s activity in your life have on your daily relationships?*
5. *Which aspect of God is the easiest for you to describe? Explain.*

The verses begin with an explanation of the human condition. As human beings, we constantly struggle between sin and grace. Paul speaks of a “spirit of slavery” and fear (vs. 15) constantly causing us to fall back and live “according to the flesh.” We admit to this sin-filled condition as we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.

6. *In what ways are we in bondage to sin?*
7. *How does sin feel like “slavery”?*
8. *How do we try to free ourselves?*

The gift God gives the believer is that of being adopted into the family of God as children and heirs. (vs. 16-17) The contrast is striking. The slave knows a great deal about fear and knows little about a full, intimate relationship with the master; in contrast, the child knows the parent intimately and is claimed as an heir.

The very fact that we say, “Our Father – Abba” bears witness to the saving act of the Spirit of God (vs. 16) who has called us “child” and adopted us into the family of God. Living in this relationship, we can pray and live in confidence, knowing that we have been accepted, forgiven, and loved by God.

9. *What does it mean to you to be adopted as a child of God?*
10. *What is our inheritance we receive as heirs?*

With the assurance of our adoption by God, we are given the strength to face our sinful condition and the sufferings and struggles of daily life, for we are a child of God.

word among us

Emily's father walked by her bedroom door and was startled to see her crying face down on her bed. She was usually a happy, contented child; she had been that way since the day 13 years ago when her adoptive parents brought her home as an infant from the Lutheran social service adoption agency. He went and sat beside her on her bed, touched her forehead and asked, "Emily, what's wrong?"

The day before, Emily and her parents had talked with her for the first time about her adoption. They showed her pictures of the day she was brought home. They showed her pictures of her baptism. They assured her of their love for her. But today, she had questions.

Emily looked at him with tear-filled eyes and sobbed, "One of the kids at school said that since I was adopted, my real mom didn't want me. Is that true?" The father wrapped her up in his arms, hugged her, and said to her, "Your real mom and dad are right here with you. We've been here with you ever since you were but a few days old. In fact, you're special because we **chose** you to be our daughter. We wanted you very much, and we were so happy and excited when you came into the family. Your mother and I are so glad you are our daughter." Emily was quiet for a moment, then she looked up at her father and said, "Oh Daddy, I love you."

1. *How would you have answered Emily's question?*
2. *Do you think the father's response was comforting? How so?*

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption." (Romans 8:14-15 NRSV) It's easy in this world to be fearful and to question who and whose we are. Competing voices in our lives cause us to doubt our identity and to question our relationship with others and with God. The good news proclaimed in today's reading is clear: God chooses us to be God's children.

3. *What might cause us to question whether we belong to God?*
4. *In those times of doubt, what brings assurance?*
5. *Do you find the language of "adoption" helpful or not? Explain.*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

Children of God – that's who we are. In our baptism, we are claimed by God and given the gift of God's Spirit. We are adopted into the family of the faith. Even when others may cause us to wonder whether we really belong to God – especially in those moments – the Spirit comes to assure us that we are children of God – loved, chosen, adopted. Confident in that relationship of intimacy, identity, and trust, we can say to our loving God, "Abba! Father!" "Our Father" "Oh Daddy, I love you!"

6. *How do you relate to your adopted family, the church?*
7. *To what extent are we to "live among God's faithful people"?*

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

last word

As you begin each day this week,
look in the mirror and say,
"I am a child of God."

Daily Faith Practices

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