

**Out of the Depths, Into the Light**  
**June 3, 2007**

***Rev. Broadbent:***

Is life, or is death, the greater mystery? That is a question that faith gets to ask. Is life, or is death, the greater mystery? We tend to answer that it is death, because none of us has been there. Maybe, briefly. But isn't life just as mysterious? Faith gets to ask these questions. Especially in a world where many of us read mystery novels, and mystery novels are all about – well, there is this kind of unknown, but with the right detective work or asking the right people, we will eventually find out and solve the mystery.

Or think of the phrase, “The mysteries of science and the scientific positivists would say that the only mysteries of science are those truths that we have not yet uncovered. That is the only sort of truth that there is – truth that may, and will, eventually be uncovered.

But this is not the mystery that I believe the Christian faith refers to. This is not the sort of mystery that our church refers to in our mission statement – the statement that we embrace the mystery of God. When we speak about the mystery of God, I believe we are speaking about that which may not eventually be figured out, may not eventually be discovered in any kind of a positivistic way but rather, and only, relationally.

We have a day in the Christian year that we celebrate today, which is the day when we talk about the mystery of God and where we identify that mystery as being this: relationship. That day is Trinity Sunday.

I was in a church once on Trinity Sunday, and the pastor said, “Well, since you all have heard so many sermons about the Trinity before, I'm going to preach about something else.” I remember thinking, “No,” because I believe this notion, this Christian notion of the triune God is perhaps the least well understood or comprehended idea. See what we fix on is, “Okay, well, it's God is three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but somehow they are all one. Yeah, I kind of get it. Let's move on.” It is much, much deeper than that, I believe.

This statement of the Trinity says that God is not some single thing out there, somewhere. God is relationship. God is not some abstract concept that we need to kind of work through and eventually figure out. God is dynamic relationship. Think of a dance or a beautiful piece of music. That is God. That is like God. Not that or that, but that. The entirety of the relation of all things, that is God.

I remember once when I was in grade school, one of my peers went up to my father who is a minister, was a minister, and asked him, “So what does the

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Trinity mean? I don't understand that." And I thought, "This is going to be good. I wonder what he will say." And what he said was quite satisfying to me. He said, "Well, you have a father, right?" "Yep, yep." "Okay, but your father is also married to someone." "Right, right." "That's your mom. Okay, so your father is a father, and he is also a husband. But he is still the same person, right?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah." "Okay, so your father, who is one person, is a father and a husband, and does he have brothers or sisters?" "Oh, yeah. He has a brother and a sister." "Okay, so your father, who is one person, is a father and a husband, and a brother. But he is all the same person." "Yeah, yeah." "The Trinity is kind of like that." And of course we always and only can say that it is kind of like that. That is what makes it a mystery.

I love that notion, but I also thought, well, but he is also a friend, and he has a vocation, and maybe he is an uncle. So why stop at three? The only place I've come to is that you do not need to use any number greater than three to suggest the dynamic relationship. God is not just one, solitary, off somewhere, existing for God's own self. God is not just a duality, polar opposites, or something like that. God is a dynamic relationship. Three or more. But here is an even more amazing thing about this mystery. It is not that it cannot be comprehended or understood, but that sometimes it can.

I think the best way for me to understand this that I'll offer is that in Spanish there are two words for "to know." One is saber, which is to know a fact or something like that. The other is colunsar [sp?], which means to be acquainted with. So is the mystery something that we are going to saber, we are going to understand all of the facts about some day? No. The Trinity reveals the mystery of God, that God is both beyond our comprehension and we can relate to that God.

God is over and above all of our thinking and yet, in some real sense, God walks beside us. God is both so far outside of us that photographs from the Hubble telescope just begin to tell the story, and yet God is also intimately within. So God will never be understood in an intellectual way, but God can be known in a relational way. And we have a right, a sacrament, in the church where that relationship is not only known, it is tasted.

We are invited to, in fact, take the mystery of God and eat it. To take it into ourselves and to allow our lives to be transformed by that relationship that we are invited into – communion. Communion, that meal that Jesus himself instituted as he gathered with his friends, as he invited them to partake, not just in the meal but in his life, in God's life, and not just here and now, but always.

Memorial Day was just last Monday. It is a time of year for remembering. A time of year for nostalgia as we graduate. And I know that as you heard this

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piece by the choir you were thinking of someone, someone you have lost. And I believe that was Rutters' intent. He was writing and dedicating this piece to his father. This person. A person probably with his own mystery, that he was remembering; and his piece invites us into that memory.

And part of the mystery of the communion that we share is that it is a meal of remembrance. "Do this in remembrance of me." And the trust that even as we gather, as we are invited, and as we gather, and as we partake at the table, it is not just we who are seated here. But in a very real way, we gather with the multitude of people of faith throughout the world, who today, and everyday, gather and partake of this meal; and we gather with those whom we remember, with the communion of saints, with the crowd of witnesses. And so it may seem, as you are approaching the station, that there is nobody in between you and the next person. But that loved one whom you thought of may be the one occupying that space.

My grandmother died last summer, and I could not help but think of her this morning and even see her dancing on the chancel steps to the beautiful music presented to us by these brothers and sisters in faith who are performing this act of worship, performing, doing fully, not just for us, but for the great crowd with whom we gather.

And so now we are invited. And so I invite all of you, as you are able, to stand and to turn and to face the rose window. For in his requiem, Rutters seeks to offer us the hope that our life is led as a journey, from darkness into light. Let us pray.

### ***Prayer***

Holy God, gracious and merciful, You bring forth food from the earth and nourish a whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care. Nourish us with these gifts, that we might be for the world signs of your gracious presence. Prepare for us now to feast on the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior, who also taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread. And after he blessed it, he broke it, and he gave it to his disciples dying, "Take, eat. This is my body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

And in a similar manner, after the supper, he took a cup, and having given thanks, he blessed it and gave it to them, and said, "Take this, all of you, and

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drink, for this is my life blood. Pour it out, as a sign of God's mercy and love. As often as you drink this cup, do so in remembrance of me."

Ministering in Christ's name, we offer you this bread and this cup. Come. All things are ready. You may be seated.

[end of sermon]