

## Trinity Sunday 2011

**“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.”**

**First of all, let me say, it’s so great to be home again after wandering over this diocese and the diocese of New Jersey. And although I am only with you for a couple of Sundays, Christ Church, as far as Jo and I are concerned, will always be our church home. I like our style. And on my travels officiating at the seven churches I have celebrated in or officiated at, I have seen many different styles of churchmanship. We’re not all quite the same. Some are high, some low, and some broad church. Some with smells and bells, some with smells and no bells, and even some with bells but no smells. Some with children who are in church for the service, some where they appear suddenly at communion, some where they are in church from the beginning to the end. Some with guitar services, some with choirs larger than the people in the pews and a couple with no choir at all. But, all liturgical actions are done for the greater glory of God. “We celebrate in the beauty of holiness not in the holiness of beauty,” a Lutheran pastor friend of mine once said. I have found all the churches I served in to be welcoming and more than hospitable.**

**Speaking of styles of worship and looking at this in an ecumenical light I have to tell you a story. A burglar broke into an affluent Main Line home one night and as he entered the hall he heard a craggy voice say, “Jesus will get you!” The burglar slowed down looking about to see where the voice was coming from and off in the dark was silhouetted a large bird cage in which was a very colorful parrot, who said, “Jesus will get you.” The burglar muttered under his breath, “Stupid bird, I don’t even believe in Jesus.”**

**As he moved into the library, he began to hunt for the safe when he heard the words again. “Jesus will get you!” He turned to laugh at the stupid bird when behind him he saw a large Mastiff dog, lips pulled back up, teeth gleaming in the nightlight, soft menacing growl, and the last he heard was the parrot saying, “sic him, Jesus.”**

I have not once found that style of spirituality in any Episcopal church, but it does exist. What's more, it seems to exist successfully. Some people like the Bible to be threatening, and yet most of the threats they seem to think are directed at others. They feel a power in that. And then there are those who can never be chastised enough. It portrays God as a negative, frightening, manipulative and intimidating force. Well, the Jesus I perceive is not out to get us.

It hurts my soul that millions of people, many of them home-bound, can hardly turn on the TV without getting that style beeping into their ears. And what hurts my soul even more is people who lump up all that under the term "Christianity."

Some of the churches I have been in are truly extended families. That's a wonderful thing, but sometimes they rush people on their first visit and then neglect them when it appears they are hooked.

I remember being in a church in New Jersey when I began my ministry where one of the elder members said to me, "Just remember, we were here before you came and we will be here long after you leave." Her saying that made me feel so welcome.

So, Jesus gives us a mandate, to go and make disciples of all nations in the name of the Trinity. The question is how?

One of the first things I learned was that most churches spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to minister to people they don't have, rather than ministering to the people they do have. Well, there is a section in the Philadelphia Inquirer called "Styles." Some people seem to gravitate to styles of worship, whether it be high/low, joyful/somber or conservative/liberal. What's the style?

What is Christ Church's style?

A church where you can be yourself, where you are challenged to be more than you think you can be. A church where different opinions can be expressed and at least seriously considered. A church where you are comfortable and included and asked to participate in what interests you. A church where you can learn more about God through Bible Study and worship, a church where you are loved and you learn to love more, and a church where the Trinity is spoken: God, eternal creator of all things, light and love, the Son whose presence illustrates perfection, wisdom, humility and forbearance, and God the Holy

**Spirit who gives strength and guidance. The Trinity is one in being and in essence.**

**Amen.**