

Blessed be God who animates our lives and pours love and grace into our hearts that we all may be one! AMEN

Today we wear orange. We do so as a gesture of unity against gun violence. Gun violence being one of the most pernicious forms of terror and injustice to which this world is subjected. Just two days ago there was another mass shooting in Virginia Beach, the 150th in the 152 days of 2019!

So whether you actually have some orange or just think about it, the point is to witness to the need for social justice in the world and to acknowledge that this is the Christian call.

I did a little research on the color orange this week and I found this: Orange is a combination of red and yellow. Red is filled with energy and stimulation, and yellow is responsible for the happiness and cheerfulness. It is a more active color because it makes us react by gut feeling, and we feel at that particular moment.

It is the color that gives you shelter in tough moments, by not allowing you to sink into grief or disappointment. It brings a high degree of positivism, always rejuvenating us in the most difficult moments. The great and invigorating benefits of the orange color should be used every day, even if it is just a small object, like a mug or a pen, which we use in our daily tasks.

Rejuvenating us in the most difficult moments; great and invigorating benefits...

Sounds a lot like a God who makes all things new and a Trinity which inspires, enriches and energizes the work of divine restoration.

Orange then for the church this day on this issue is a symbol of the Body of Christ, in communion, standing together. Orange is sacramental; communion is sacramental. We continue as we have for over 2000 years to look for outward and visible signs of the inward and visible grace, in fact the pervasive immanence and transcendence of God's grace.

Never has this world needed our witness more. Never has this world been more divided, fragmented and desperate.

Yet today as we do every Sunday we gather in communion, union together, to remember salvation history and specifically the Gospel message: that all may be one

Oneing is the process and ultimate state of divine being. The Trinity in its vigorous eternal dance of interaction between creation, redemption and reconciliation is ONE GOD. We are ONE BODY.

However, This message is the hardest of all to actually realize. We might be kind to our neighbors, feed the hungry, give to the poor, etc....but true love and true unity are so difficult to see much less operationalize. Won't we always have our differences and won't we always have our enemies? Won't there always be terror? And the real question...are we not as humans incapable of giving up control? or total surrender?

I think it is necessary today to remember two things: that this fulfillment of God's promise of union for all is, like the Kingdom, here and yet to come, a process but a divinely inspired one....it is the process of transformation.. The God who is making all things new, is the God in whose image we are created and who invites us to participate in this transformational process: Becoming the beloved community whereby violence oppression and greed are replaced by justice mercy and compassion by virtue of grace and love and forgiveness.

And secondly, that the union of which Jesus speaks in its completion, as Revelation would suggest, is beyond our comprehension and remains a mystery. So we use poetry and myth and metaphor. We who are made in God's image are not just made in the image of incarnation, human, flesh and blood, but we are also made in the trinitarian image of God. The energy, the divinity, the synergistic dance which merges each of us to God and to each other. We cannot explain it or define it...we must simply be it!

In short whether we know it or not, believe it or not, it is happening. oneing happens!

This infusion of Grace happens invisibly and invincibly

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As the Gospel of John begins, with my paraphrase, The Word, Love Incarnate, came into and is coming into the world. Like drenching rain from which we cannot escape God's love is poured into and onto creation. Rain without ceasing amen.

The divine seed planted in us will receive that watery love and grow from it. The other part of us, the not divine part of us, looks for raingear! protection from grace?!

Jesus says dwell in me as I do in you...Be the raining love!

And all may be one, all may be drenched in the love.

These are poetic and mystical images which offer a less concrete description of faith than the synoptic gospels. Together they offer the eternal fulfillment.

For just as faith requires images and symbols and even facts, it also requires imagination and emptiness and mystery.

This is where the language of the Gospel of John assists

The Gospel of John stands apart from the other three gospels. It is mystical and cosmic. Its Christology is of a Christ for all time, who came and will come, the Word Incarnate. Throughout the Gospel heaven and earth are in dialogue, as are human and divine.

We are fortunate that we have so many beautiful passages from Scripture to inform and support our faith. And I am not sure there is any more beautiful, universal and communal than this farewell prayer. It is the message which situates Christ among his disciples and locates Him in our lives and all lives throughout time. It is the message which points to a power within each of us to become one with God. "the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Yet we struggle with imaging and imagining this paradoxical Oneness!

This unity of which Christ speaks is manifest in the Ascension which we celebrated Thursday, in the glorification of Christ. But as I said in my written message this week this glorification is not a moment in time nor a particular physical locational posture. It is instead, like the Resurrection, a holy mystery which I believe is meant to convey the glorification and sanctification in which we are all intimately involved and in which we are ultimately going to participate. It is according to the Greek term the telos, the end of time as we know it. And the teleological point is exactly to what Jesus speaks in his farewell.

Revelation offers images of this new age...white robes of glory clothing /all with blood washed away for all time
Prophets foretell this second coming and the radical paradoxical states which will transpire.
This New Jerusalem is coming and it will be union like we have never known.

The purpose of the farewell prayer is unity not for its own sake but for the sake of witness to the love of God and the authenticity of Christ as the one whose incarnation is also ours. (Feasting on the Word, Theology)
Ours...everyone's. This sanctification and indwelling power is not only the very reality of the Trinity but it is also the power and hope which is ours. It is the beloved community to which we are called.

It seems to me that this prayer is never more needed than now. I may be stating the obvious and certainly am stating the sentiment of many times in history, Roman rule, the Civil War, the Holocaust, not just our times now... And at one level we are certainly talking about a peace which passes understanding, a unity unsurpassed. But on another deeper level, we are talking less about an observed state without discord than about a pervasive and invasive state of being for all creatures. The Peaceable Kingdom. Lions lying down with lambs and weapons being transformed into tuning forks.

In this Kingdom this transformed community ,the powerful are brought down from their thrones and the lowly are lifted up; the hungry are filled

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with good things while the rich are sent away empty to try again (Luke) The poor are blessed and those who weep learn to laugh.

How to bring about this Kingdom or how to help God do so? We model the servant leadership of Jesus to bring good news to the poor to proclaim release to the captives to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Just imagine were we all each and every one of us to do this completely: we would get drenched in holy harmonious love

Howard Thurman who with Martin Luther King coined the image of the beloved community, says:

"There is in every person an inward sea, and in that sea there is an island and on that island there is an altar and standing guard before the altar is the 'angel with the flaming sword.' Nothing can get by that angel to be placed upon the altar unless it has the mark of your inner authority. Nothing passes 'the angel with the flaming sword' to be placed upon your altar unless it be part of 'the fluid area of your consent.' This is your crucial link with the Eternal."

He goes on to note that:

There is a profound ground of unity that is more pertinent and authentic than all the unilateral dimensions of our lives. This a man discovers when he is able to keep open the door of his heart. This is one's ultimate responsibility, and it is not dependent upon whether the heart of another is kept open for him. Here is a mystery: If sweeping through the door of my heart there moves continually a genuine love for you, it by-passes all your hate and all your indifference and gets through to you at your center. You are powerless to do anything about it. You may keep alive in devious ways

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the fires of your bitter heart, but they cannot get through to me. Underneath the surface of all the tension, something else is at work. It is utterly impossible for you to keep another from loving you. (From The Inward Journey.)

The Holy Spirit is working in us that we recognize and realize our inner islands and be led to that fulfillment of union with the Divine! Our souls are intimately and eternally connected to Christ. Our souls then are intimately connected to each other.

As Julian of Norwich observed when she gazed at a hazelnut in the palm of her hand: "And in this he showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, 'What may this be?' And it was answered generally thus, 'It is all that is made.' I marveled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God.

each of us is loved beyond measure and that love is for eternity
each of us is made by God cared for by the Trinity
each of us is closer to God than we are to ourselves
We are thus in and of each other

I invite you to pray for this oneness, to witness to the violence in the world and to reject it in the name of Jesus, to stand with all creation in unity against injustice, and to welcome the peace which comes from dwelling in and with our Savior.

This is the beloved community here on earth! And the beloved community might be orange, energetic, witnesses to a new kind of justice.