

Trinity Church in the City of Boston

The Rev. Morgan S. Allen

June 12, 2022

Trinity Sunday, John 16:12-15

Come Holy Spirit, and enkindle in the hearts of your faithful, the fire of your Love. *Amen.*

Standing in the midst of the three-dimensional map that the robot BB-8 projects, Han Solo raises his head at the mention of his old friend, Luke Skywalker.

“[Luke] was training a new generation of Jedi,” Solo explains. “One boy, an apprentice, turned against him, destroyed it all. Luke felt responsible. He just walked away from everything.”

“Do you know what happened to him,” Fin asks.

“A lot of rumors, stories [really]. People that knew him best think he went looking for the first Jedi temple.”

“The Jedi were real?!” Rey interrupts, her incredulity mingled with excitement.

Solo now steps toward Rey, meeting her hope with an earnestness rare for the aging cynic. He continues: “I used to wonder about that myself. Thought it was a bunch of mumbo-jumbo: a magical power holding together good and evil ... the dark side and the light. Crazy thing is, it’s true: the Force; the Jedi; all of it. It’s all true.”ⁱ

The intergalactic smuggler-turned-sage might well have continued:

“I still have so many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth ... and will declare to you the things that are to come.”ⁱⁱ

It’s all true.

Much to the frustration of my daughter, I am behind in the continuing stories of the *Star Wars* universe, so please do not share spoilers from the last couple movies, *The Mandalorian*, or last week’s installment of the Kenobi series. And you can trust that I will return the favor, for this exchange from 2015’s *The Force Awakens* is in the trailer that introduces the first of the new episodes on The Disney Plus, one of the 14 streaming services currently with a hand in my pocket. To see Harrison Ford vested as Han Solo after all those years of waiting post-*Return of the Jedi* still makes my heart beat a little faster.

In this scene, Solo assumes the Obi-Wan role from the 1977 original film, and he encourages his young companions' belief. Solo senses in Rey and Fin (the most recent trilogy's protagonists) the same stirring that he remembers of his own heart, felt on the very same deck of the very same Millennium Falcon: a desire to believe – an affinity for a truth beyond his corporeal experience – matched only by the suspicion and guardedness their difficult lives' have provoked in them. This hunger for faith leaves all the characters both strong *and* vulnerable: *powerful* as they grow together in the light side of The Force, and *fragile* as their shared lives deepen their compassion.

Even without the lightsabers, Wookies, and droids, the disciples of Jesus were not so different than these fictional icons ... and, of course, neither are we. Fundamentally, I believe the old, existential mysteries still stir our hearts – our spirits still longing for the eternal and aching to believe – yet, at the same time, we *fear* such a force, for we understand faith will make *us* vulnerable, caring as we will not only for ourselves, but for an entire community, *for the whole world*. The cohering Spirit Jesus promises this morning both woos and terrifies us.

Not so unlike the swift liturgical movement carrying us from the babe born on Christmas morning to the adult prophet baptized only days into January, as summer now begins we move from last Sunday's celebrations of Holy Baptism to this morning's prayers for our high-school graduates ... from the cradle to college in just a week.

During our Pentecost baptisms, we celebrated those young children's belovedness in God. We named that they have been loved by God from the beginning of time, and that they will be loved forever. We prayed that God would grant them "the gift of joy and wonder," and, as their family of faith, *we* made a promise "to support them in their life in Christ."ⁱⁱⁱ

We again celebrate today: having kept our word to support the families of this Beloved Community, this morning we name that as their young adults have been, so they will be: *always* beloved, and *never* alone ... never without the company of the Holy Spirit and never without the support of this community – and not this congregation only, but the wider community of our Church, hopefully to find an engaging Episcopal chaplaincy wherever they go next. So, too, we set a loving hand on the shoulder of their parents who also begin a new season of life, one demanding they let go of these precious ones they have, for so long, labored to keep close.

These thresholds mark important moments, not only for the households involved, but for all of us as a parish family and as the Body of Christ. In the life of the God who is Three and who is One, these occasions are the work of the Spirit, for they bring others' lives to our hearts' attention and affection. In the most immediate setting of our congregation, these rites nurture our empathy: as we could see in those sweet babies our own children's countenances, we can see in these eager graduates reflections of ourselves. We can see in their parents our joy and our fear, our excitement and our grief – not the same, of course, but with resonances from our own lives that increase our compassion and allow us to hold one another more lovingly.

On Trinity Sunday we mark our namesake feast, celebrating not only with these recognitions and the first Worship from the West Porch of our summer season, but with our second-annual Trinity Sunday of Giving, a 24-hour campaign inviting our Trinity community to make a meaningful gift for a timely purpose beyond our operating budget. While we have high hopes for what our generosity will empower, we have set incremental goals throughout the day based on the number of gifts received, rather than the dollar amount raised. This focus allows for equity in our appeal; everyone can participate at the same level, for every gift will count the same: *as one*. For some, these gifts will be in addition to their pledge; for others, these gifts will comprise the core of their annual giving; and, for all, we hope that the opportunity will be another work of the Spirit, the God who is a community bringing others' lives to our hearts' attention and affection.

See, in a decidedly Trinitarian turn, this year's program will have three ends, supporting not only our local needs, but the grieving communities of Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York. Here on Copley Square, one third of the funds we raise will go toward important upgrades of our audio-video systems, including replacement of the primary banks of speakers that support our indoor worship experience, as well as enrichments our livestreaming facilities.

Beyond ourselves, we have coordinated with Saint Philip's Episcopal Church-Uvalde and Saint Philip's Episcopal Church-Buffalo, and we will share with each a third of what we raise today. Believing we can most enduringly support their communities' healing by fortifying the Episcopal institutions in their midst, these offerings will be entirely unrestricted, no-strings-attached gifts in support of their ministry, to be used as they deem best and most impactful.

While the world's condition can certainly support our suspicion and guardedness, on this Trinity Sunday we nonetheless dare a faith that opens us more and more to one another, that deepens our love and compassion, for the promises we pronounce are not a bunch of swashbuckling "mumbo-jumbo," but, in the words of General Solo, are *true*:

- . the Jedi and the Judeans ... the Force and the faith ...
- . the first day of kindergarten and the final days of high school, of college ...
- . our vulnerability *as* our strength ...
- . believing that we do *here*, makes a difference *there*, wherever "there" is ...
- . our essential bonds with one another and with the communities of Saint Philip's in Uvalde and in Buffalo and beyond...

All of this – *it's true* – beautiful and good

For the life of the world to come,
Amen.

ⁱ *The Force Awakens*. Directed by J.J. Abrams, performances by John Boyega, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford, and Daisy Ridley. Lucasfilm-Disney. 2015.

ⁱⁱ John 16:12-13.

ⁱⁱⁱ From *The Book of Common Prayers*, pp. 308, 303.