

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church  
The Rev. Barbara Hutchinson  
Trinity Sunday Year C  
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When I find myself in times of trouble  
Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be  
And in my hour of darkness  
She is standing right in front of me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be  
Yeah, let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be

-Lennon/McCartney

These words may be very familiar to you. You, like me, may have been glued to the TV set every Sunday evening to watch the Ed Sullivan show, especially when the new young rock group, the Beatles made their American TV debut. If this is true, you like me, know most of their songs by heart.

What's interesting to me about these particular lyrics is the repeated theme of words of wisdom spoken by Mother Mary, the bearer of God into the world, in times of trouble, in the hours of darkness, or when the night is cloudy. The lyricist is calling out to Mother Mary, to offer words of wisdom, which will allow the light to shine again. And isn't that so much like us? However we name the divine, whomever we see as the theotokas, the ones who bear God into the world for us, whomever we imagine the trinity to be, we look to the divine for wisdom. We kneel in prayer, we meet with our spiritual directors, we sit in meditation and listen with our hearts, we bear our soul in confession, and we rely up our higher power to bring insight, direction, and a sense of purpose into our lives. This is faithful living, understanding that there is a force within us, among us, and equally important, beyond us, which gives us the wisdom that we need to align our will with God's, and thus have purpose and meaning in our lives.

In our reading from Book of Proverbs today, the character of Sophia, Wisdom, or the Holy Spirit is introduced. She is personified to help us more clearly understand this first creation of God and how she lives and moves and has her being within, among, and beyond us. Our reading is a way to flesh out the nebulous word we often attribute to the Holy Spirit: sanctifier, for what does that really mean, to make us holy? For, often, we must wonder, what does it look like for holiness to reside in our lives? And because the Holy Spirit is so difficult to get a grasp on in terms of what this presence might look like in our lives, we often ignore this part of the trinity. We find we can pray to God, the Godhead, the whole of the divine, and we can pray to Jesus, comprehending our common link to Jesus through our shared

humanity, but the Holy Spirit is so mysterious, so mystical, we often ignore her being an integral part of the Trinity, and thus diminish our experience of God.

I want to make her role more tangible for you today. So let's play a bit, in the spirit of the delight of the human characteristics of Wisdom, as we imagine her being personified in our world today.

Now the image that comes foremost into my mind for Sophia or Wisdom or the Holy Spirit is very easy for me to articulate to you, if you are TV binging on the same show I have been obsessing with this past week – Season 2 of *Grace and Frankie*. Do you know the show: with the all-star cast of Jane Fonda, Martin Sheen, Lily Tomlin, and Sam Waterston? For me, the character Lily Tomlin plays, Frankie, completely personifies Wisdom: light in spirit, daring, exuberant, loving extravagantly, wholly, completely, a bit on the wild side, unconventional, always ready to talk about feelings of the moment, and always able to recognize and speak the truth in love. One of my favorite images of her in the show is when she's standing on the beach, with the sea breeze blowing her long floating and graceful hair, laced with gray, actively resisting any confinement in a bun on the top of her hair, and you can imagine her hollering an invitation to the entire world to become fully alive, to embrace all that life has to offer. That is wisdom in a nutshell. That is the third person of the Trinity: the part that takes pure delight in our humanity.

However, if you don't know this show, let's look at what we do know about her from our text: Wisdom is found wherever paths meet, in each encounter, in every relationship. She resides beside the gates leading into the city, where people come and go, where they encounter hope. Can you see her at our community meal? I can. She shows up where justice happens, where the wise open their mouths, where the compassionate plead for mercy for others, where victims become survivors, where reconciliation occurs. She sits with those making decisions, where people decide to embark on new journeys. She delights in and embraces the couple making the choice to have their union blessed by God in marriage; she flits wherever God's people are present, which means she's on the soccer field, with the farmers planting the seeds, and she hovers over the students in the classrooms, spreading God's wings of love over the children as a hen broods over her chicks. She peeks into the churches and delights when she finds love. She speaks to everyone and invites us all to the life-giving feast of God. Can you see her here among us? I can.

Understanding this image of Wisdom, or the Spirit, which was present at creation, of what became the gift of the Holy Spirit, given to humanity by Jesus, so that his presence may live on through us, is important for us to know and be in relationship with. It formed the foundational basis for the early Christian understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.

First of all, right up front, Wisdom introduces feminine imagery to our conception of God. Her presence as the first brought forth from God, and clearly described as feminine through the use of a feminine Hebrew word, says to us, in order to comprehend any part of God, we must attribute to God characteristics of

both femininity and masculinity. Foundational to our belief in the trinity is that God is the Lord of all.

In describing herself as God's first creation, before the creation of our world and of humankind, she has established that the fullness of God was together at the time of creation. The fact that the early Christians were able to draw upon this knowledge of a multi-faceted God existent before creation allowed them to take these sacred texts and adapt and adopt a new understanding of the God of Israel to fit into their new reality of Jesus, the Son of God, who we know from the gospel of John was in the beginning with God. They expanded their conception of the God of Israel, who brought forth wisdom, then our creation, and to make sense of Jesus. In our gospel today, Jesus tells his disciples that they aren't ready to handle the fullness of the truth, that it will be unfolding, through all the ages. This is why we, as Episcopalians, believe the truth in the Bible continues to be unraveled and revealed to us, and we, like the early Christians, must also take our sacred texts and fit them into the new reality God presents to us today. It is not heresy, but faithful Christian practice, based upon the practice of the early Christian Church, to understand that God continues to be revealed to us and that we can pull the truth from our sacred texts and make it fit to what God is doing in the world today. From their tradition, the early Christians were able to see God the creator, Wisdom as the one rejoicing in God's inhabited world, and now Jesus, the Word, the Logos in John's gospel, as all pre-existent to the creation of the world. This is the foundation of our doctrine of the Trinity. The fullness of God: the creator, redeemer, and sustainer, were all present at our creation.

Now, Sophia offers us one other important understanding of God. Whereas God the creator, after creating humankind, said, "this is very good," Sophia is described as taking complete delight in humankind. We have a sense that she is full of joy, energy, and light. She is a free spirit who embraces and finds joy around every corner. This is a good description of the God we can embrace. Sophia, Wisdom, The Holy Spirit shapes our understanding of the character of God who is not a God stingy with love or acceptance, nor is God the divine grump, begrudgingly doling out forgiveness to us, the unworthy sinners, but rather the image we get from Wisdom is a joyous God who pours out overflowing gifts with gladness. No wonder our response, in our post communion prayer, is to be sent out into the world with gladness and singleness of heart. Of course, it is right that our response to a God who delights in us is our reciprocal delight in God.

This is the gift Wisdom offers us: the knowledge that we are in relationship with a God we cannot bear to comprehend, yet who delights us and we in God.

Let us hear the words of wisdom, when she hollers from the rooftops, canyons or beaches an invitation to us all to come and dance with her; when she whispers soft encouraging words of wisdom when we walk in nature and she has captured all our attention through the sound of silence; when she meets us in our times of trouble, and when she explodes our joy to unimaginable heights.

Wisdom is here, calling us as a parish, inviting us to walk, laugh, play, and dance into the light of God's new day, throwing open doors to new opportunities for us, while asking us to find God present in each encounter we offer each other. She invites all, embraces all, and delights in all. Amen.