

Do you remember being asked—maybe in grade school—whether a tree falling all alone in a forest makes a sound? I was one of those insufferable students who was so very sure that I knew the “correct” answer. Worse, I was sure that my logical answer was the ONLY correct answer.

Of course, there is no answer to the “fallen tree” question that makes logical sense. Turns out, though, that since I was in grade school, physicists have learned that reality changes—at least on a subatomic level—depending on whether reality is being observed. Logic can be variable. Factor THAT into your “fallen tree” answer. The sound I hear is “ut oh!”

Maybe you’re wondering, “What do fallen trees and observation-dependent reality have to do with US, here, TODAY? This is Trinity Sunday, when you are supposed to be explaining the nature of God to us. You know:

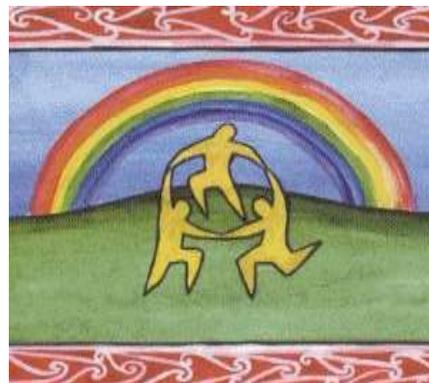
- There is one (and only one) God.
- But God is three persons.
- And each person is fully God.

“We’re waiting,” I suspect you are thinking, “for you to forget physics and explain how God could be both one and three all at the same time.”

And I say, “There, right there. Do you hear that lonely tree screaming?” And when you look at me like I have lost my marbles, I ask, “Have you experienced God? What was the God you experienced like? Father, Son, or Holy Spirit?”

A famous preacher, Barbara Brown Taylor, in her sermon, “Three Hands Clapping,” insists that thinking about the nature of God acts like a koan. A koan is a paradoxical question asked of Buddhist monks-in-training to free them from dependence on logic. Apparently, the path to enlightenment requires Buddhists to be less certain that logic provides all the answers. Apparently, Christians should consider this, as well, if Jesus’ parables are any indication. Ms. Taylor suggests that much of Jesus’ teaching, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity, work in exactly the same way as a koan. Or it would, if we thought about Jesus’ individual teachings more than once a year.

None of us—no one—knows the nature of God logically. The only way we know God is through our experiences of God. Of course, we can pool our experiences of God through the ages and agree that God is this or that, or God is like this or that. There are branches of theology that keep track of what we’ve



agreed that God is like. But be warned: God is God—free to be whatever God chooses to be, depending on who’s looking, depending on their relationship with God.

Once we are free of logic, we perceive what’s at the heart of God’s nature: God’s unconditional love for us and the desire to be in relationship with us as they are with each other. When we experience God-the-Father or God-the-Son or God-the-Holy Spirit, all three are dancing a dance of love. They exist in relationship with each other, in perfect harmony, giving and receiving love, love abundant for all of creation.

God-the-Father and God-the-Son and God-the-Holy Spirit are not aspects of each other, not three parts of one thing. They are not, for instance, like the fruit and the seed and the core or an apple, and not like water, ice, and steam. Sure, we use these metaphors to teach children about the Trinity. If you want a metaphor, maybe a better one would be three distinctly different notes, played together in God-chords of love.

And here’s why we should care what God is like. God shows us how we should be also. This is what God wishes for us, that we all be one, as they are one.

You know already how very difficult we humans find being one with each other. Until we follow the example of Christ Jesus and ask the Father for the help of the Spirit that Jesus sent to dwell within us to guide us and help us into oneness.

See, here’s a perfectly good, yet illogical answer to the “fallen tree” question: the tree is never alone. God is one with the tree, just as God is one with us, so you and I are one with the tree, if we could perceive it.

I suspect that many of you would prefer a more logical explanation of how God could be simultaneously one God, yet three distinct persons. So before I quit, I have two more metaphors for us to consider.

The first, “quantum entanglement,” is currently a very hot topic of study and debate in physics. Quantum entanglement is where separate particles act as if they were one entity, even when the individual particles are very far apart physically. The quantum state of such particles are identical, and therefore cannot be described independently of the others. In other words, if you know the quantum state of one of the entangled particles, that is the state of all the others.

Quantum entanglement is an example of something in our world acting like the Trinity seems to function. Maybe physicists should call it “divine entanglement.”

That was for you left-brained people. Here's my last metaphor about the nature of God for right-brained folks. This one comes from hearing the rap song "Nobody" from DJ Quik's album, "The Book of David." A part of the chorus goes like this:

*I don't need nobody, I don't want nobody,
I don't care about nobody, I just care about me.*

This song is about coming to terms with the pain of a romantic break-up by shutting everyone out—the antithesis of the divine Trinity. God's love is so abundant that the one God does not contain all the love. Instead, that love is shared among three persons of the one God and thrown out into all of creation, inviting us to dance forever with God in this love. Unlike this song.

The person I heard rapping this song added at the end of the chorus line, "I just care about me: ME, MYSELF, AND I." A turn of phrase. We use this phrase all the time to emphasize "just me." And the way we emphasize JUST ME the most is to make ourselves THREE: "me, myself, and I." Where, do you suppose, do we get THAT inclination?

I ask in the Name of God, who gives us glimpses of himself and invites us to dance with him—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and through him with each other, in eternal love.