

## FAREWELL TO DOMINATION AND WELCOME TO COMMUNITY

Trinity Sunday  
Charles D. Mayer  
June 7, 2020

On a late August day in 1973, my parents piled my three younger sisters and me into our big old Plymouth and drove the ten hours from Long Island to Ohio to drop me off at college. As I recall I had one big trunk, a suitcase, a winter coat, a bicycle, a viola, a trombone, and a typewriter. Plus, I had eighteen years of hopes and dreams and excitement gathered up and was ready to watch them unfold.

Oberlin, Ohio is a tiny place. It is completely flat – as flat as the South Shore of Long Island – and it sits in the middle of farmland. That first night, with my family heading back home, I explored the campus and the town for what seemed like many hours, walking alone and just absorbing my new surroundings. Well after midnight, near the end of my walk, I stood smack in the middle of a four-way intersection at the center of town (there was no traffic, let alone other people), and looked across the great open flatness to the horizon in all four directions. It was then that I knew how far from home I was. It was farewell to my old life, and welcome to something entirely new.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell,” Paul says at the end of his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:11a). Paul had founded this community; he had ministered to them through divisiveness and squabbles; he had written some of his greatest words to them. Now, he is saying goodbye. And in his very last words to them, he offers the most explicit formulation of the Trinity in the entire body of his letters: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Cor. 13:13). Paul chooses the Trinity as his last word to this community that he values and cherishes so much. With this farewell, *he* ushers in something entirely new: the truth that God’s own Self is a community of persons in relationship - a Son whose grace redeems us, a Father whose love creates us, a Spirit whose presence sustains and guides us. It is a new world in which the Corinthians are invited to understand that as people created in God’s image, they are created *for communal life*: it is only in life together that we reflect who God is.

Now, it seems, at this moment in human history, it is time for another farewell: a farewell to the systems of injustice and domination that distort God’s intentions for Creation - systems that promote individualism, selfishness, hatred, and greed. These decrepit systems undermine the communal, and thereby distort the very image of God. God’s healing will come only when individualism, selfishness, hatred, and greed are replaced by community, selflessness, love, and generosity. And the time for these replacements is now.

“Let us make humankind in **our** image, according to our likeness,” God says in the Creation narrative (Gen. 1:26). At the very beginning of the Hebrew bible, long before the idea of the Trinity was clearly spelled out, God refers to God’s Self in the plural. The image in which we humans are created is plural. It is for us humans, God says, to “be fruitful and multiply, [to] fill the earth and subdue it; and *have dominion* over the fish ... and the birds ... and over every living thing” (Gen. 1:28).

Have dominion. Notice that the word is dominion, not domination. Powerful voices are saying that domination is what is needed now. But domination is the way of selfish and greedy individuals promoting their own interests. Domination is an act of aggression. Dominion is the way of communal love in relationship. Dominion is an attribute. It is the sovereignty our Triune God, our God-in-Relationship, has over us, which we are invited to have, communally and collectively, over the Creation of which we are a part. It is time to say farewell to domination, once and for all. Farewell to domination, and the corrupt structures it produces. It is time for them to be replaced.

To have dominion is to preside over Creation in accordance with Creation's own order. This is the task God has given us humans. It can only be done in relationship: with each other, and with the rest of Creation. It can only be done with love: for one another, and for the rest of Creation. It can only be done by listening: to the Word of God, and to the deep language of the rhythms of Creation.

It is time. Farewell to domination. Farewell to white privilege, racism, sexism, militarism, economic injustice, environmental degradation. We stand at a crossroads as a species. As far as the eye can see, in every direction, the world cries out to be made entirely new. For us in the Church, it is in the Trinity that we find the key to that transformation. There will be no healing without community and relationship. Like God, we are called to live in community and relationship. And in this Trinitarian way of living, all things can be made entirely new.