

Homily – May 31, 2026

During the pandemic, as I wandered the streets of the residential community in which I lived in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, there were, as probably for you, all sorts of different emotions and thoughts and feelings running through one's head. It was 2020, and there were no vaccines, and we didn't know what things would look like. And even just to walk, people would cross to the other side of the street because we really didn't know how infectious it was, how it could be transmitted and so on. And in the middle of that, I sort of increased the conversations, the frequency of the conversations I was having with my spiritual director. One of the tools, one of the suggestions for my spiritual life was that I start each day with St. Patrick's breastplate. And that's what we're going to sing, or part of it, following the homily this morning. You might like to take a look at it. It's maybe on the following page or the bottom of that page. I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity, the invocation of the same, the three in one and one in three.

So St. Patrick in the 5th century, was trying to follow that great commission that we just heard from Matthew to go to all the world and to preach the gospel and to baptize. But of course, in the 5th century that was a dangerous exercise. not unlike just going to the grocery store in the middle of COVID, one did not know whether one would live or not. So, this was the idea that you would metaphorically put on the armor of God. The armor of God was understood as this great Trinity, this great encapsulation of the Christian faith.

The Trinity is a beautiful thing, but I want to note that it creates a lot of difficulties when it comes to interfaith and interreligious dialogue. You see, for Jewish people, there is only one Lord and one God. And to express God's divinity in three persons, that's quite unusual, if not incompatible with the faith. For Muslim people, as people who submit to God and the oneness of God, their proclamation is the unity of God fully. And so if we come to interfaith and interreligious dialogue with the Trinity, that may be deeply offensive. But at the same time, it's something which sets us apart and something that we wrestle with day after day. We might not think about it much, maybe in the context of our baptism as we remembered that at the beginning of the service. We might think about the blessing at the end of the service, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But we might not think too much about what that actually means and how it actually affects our lives.

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I think the church is quite smart after having all the great celebration of Easter, the 50 great days, coming to Pentecost and the idea of the church being birthed out of the Holy Spirit. Today is kind of a bit of a reset day where we go back to the foundations. We go back to the foundation of our faith and we go back to the foundation of the creation. the beginning of all that is understood to be made. Now, we know that there are two creation myths in Genesis. This is the first. And the second is the story about Adam and Eve, and Eve being created out of the rib of Adam and so on. And the first one is much more this rhythmic, poetic rollout of all that is good. So, God creates with purpose and intentionality. This was written much later than other texts in Genesis. And it was an attempt to address the question that we might all have. Where did we come from?

John Bulemy is a school chaplain, retired from Minnesota, and he argued that all great religious faiths tried to ask these questions. Where do we come from? What's above us? Where do we fit? How did we get here? And how do we live? And so we ask that final question in light of all the others. If God's creation is good, then what is our duty to preserve and protect it? If God has asked us to rest on the Sabbath, what does that mean for our individual lives and the lives of the communities in which we live? What does it mean to truly find our place in the world? Does it mean to be domineering? Or does it mean to be stewards? Does it mean trying to get ahead? Or does it mean trying to understand that everything good is to be shared?

Paul was having the same problem with the early church in Corinth. And he finishes up with almost this kind of blessing, but almost in a sense of sort of exasperation. I don't know if you hear that in this second letter to the Corinthians. Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Be restored. Listen to my appeal. Agree with one another. Live in peace. Basically, I've said all these things, but if you're not going to get all of that, at least get this one thing right. Please listen to me. Please get along. Please live in peace. And if you do, and if you're able to, then the God of peace will be with you. You will experience the love of God through ancestor's past, present, and yet to come, those people we call saints, and that you will experience grace beyond what you can possibly understand or imagine.

The psalm this morning reminds us of the great power and responsibility that we are given as human beings. What are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them, human beings that you should care for them? But wait, God, you have made us a little bit less than the divine. You have crowned us with glory and honor. You have put all things under our feet. So, this reminds us, as they would say in Spider-Man, of the great power and the great responsibility. that is given to all of us. And every great hero's journey from Spider-Man back to the 5th century of St. Patrick is really about wrestling with what that means.

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If God has indeed put us on a journey, if God has truly created the world with purpose and intentionality, if God has truly shown up in our lives through our baptisms and delivered us through the waters of slavery and has really promised freedom, then how shall we live? What shall we do each and every day, whether it be the choice of what we buy at the grocery store, through to how we treat our neighbor when we see them in the street, to how we not just get along in Christian community, but really effectually create a community of peace that is going to put aside difference and become one. This is ultimately the question, I think, for Kihei Lutheran in this season. How are we going to allow the parts of our history that no longer serve us be buried? And through this new season, how are we going to be raised to new life? the church suggests that the only way to understand that is through reclaiming our faith in the Trinity and reclaiming the freedom that was given to us in our baptisms.

So, our homework is to embody all that Paul wishes for that early church. It's to embody the trust and care that God has given to us, the power given to us, little lower than the angels, great power and great responsibility. It's to trust that even if we don't understand God's purpose in the world, there is purpose to be found in chaos. There is rest to be found in the midst of overwhelming demand on our lives and the lives of others. There is a great commission that has come from God. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to us. So, what are we going to do in this season together as sisters and brothers at Kihei Lutheran Church?