

I have been part of a trio for my entire life. There hasn't been a day that I was not aware of the fact that I was one of three. I've always been proud of this fact. Jenn and Kristin love to point out that I was always the one, still am in fact, that when we're walking in a specific way, I'll declare that we're in "baby order." It amuses me that it also means we're in height order from shortest to tallest, but that's not exactly Jenn's favorite fact. There is a sacredness to being the three of us, to the point that some of our most precious possessions bear our initials, rings of our birth stones with our initials on the inside band, bracelets with the simplicity of JKT that means nothing to anyone else, but everything to the three of us. It has been the three of us my whole life, and I wouldn't change that for anything.

My entire K-12 experience was illuminated by the fact that I was Jennifer and Kristin's little sister. There were a handful of teachers that had all three of us in school despite our sizeable age gap. When I would tag along with Kristin after school to make popcorn for basketball games, her friends knew and took as fact that I would be there next to her. Pictures from Jennifer's senior prom feature her, her date, and lil three year old me. Fun fact, I ended up being best friends with her date's little brother, and everyone at school remembered that our siblings went to prom together. Even when I went to college, I followed in Kristin's footsteps and so when I went into the

Gettysburg College library to apply for a job, my boss knew who I was because I belonged to Kristin. You can see how it gave me an infinite amount of joy when Jennifer went to seminary *after* me, and thus got the experience of, for once, being Tina's sister as opposed to the other way around. No matter where we go, where we live, what happens, we are fixtures in each other's lives.

Yet...for all of our connection, we are all infinitely different. The two of them hated their band experience, I was devastated to see band end when I finished *college*. Don't ask either of them to be sporty. Though Jennifer and I can watch and talk sports until we're blue in the face, and Kristin is just like meh. Kristin and I can quote tv shows, movies, music ad nauseum and half the time Jenn is playing catch-up. Our friends lovingly call Kristin the "unordained." Jenn wants nothing more than for all of us to live in Michigan, you couldn't pay Kristin to move back to Michigan, I keep my opinion on that quiet. Kristin and I call each other to vent, but we both without fail call Jennifer within seconds of an emergency or any kind of chaos. The age thing speaks for itself, I'm 15 years younger than Jenn and six younger than Kristin, giving them an eight year gap too. But even with all of that, we are...we three. Don't ask me to not be their little sister or to not go to bat for one of them if the world turns against them. We are each

other's everything while also being our deeply individual selves, and well, let's not commit heresy or anything here, but the intricacy of the Trinity relationship that we celebrate today is one that I absolutely get. You can't have one without the others, and yet the one is also capable of standing strong on their own.

God bless Nicodemus he is *trying* but he is a lot like us when trying to solve the Rubix cube that is the Trinity, he keeps turning and turning and turning and the light just won't come on. Light being the operative word there because John makes a big deal of pointing out that Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. This isn't just about having the cover of darkness to protect him from anyone seeing that he, a leader of the synagogue, is coming to Jesus, but in John's gospel, darkness is also a symbol of unbelief or uncertainty. All of this is to tell us that Nicodemus feels lost, but he's trying. He has questions, but he doesn't always understand the answers.

He's coming to Jesus with what are essentially, Trinitarian questions. On the one hand, he gets it, Jesus has come from God, somehow, some way, God has blessed Jesus with the knowledge to teach, buttttt he's not so sure about the whole Jesus as God's Son thing, like they're connected but they're not family. He gets that Jesus has come to draw people closer to God, to help them learn about God, but he doesn't exactly get *how* they're supposed

to do what he's talking about. Jesus is talking in metaphors and with ethereal depth and Nicodemus is trying to turn this into an anatomy lesson of how exactly one is born from their mother twice. The Holy Spirit isn't really comprehensible to him. Ok, God sent Jesus, and Jesus is meant to draw us closer to God, but don't ask him to explain how it's the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit moving through the world that really does that, how it breathes new life into us, so that we are a new person, washed clean in water and Spirit, not literally reborn.

Then Jesus just throws *everything* out of whack. Nicodemus thinks he at least has a handle on what God has sent Jesus to do, and then Jesus is like, umm hard nope, I'm not here for condemnation. I'm not here because God sent me to bring the hammer down. I'm here because God loves you, because God loves the whole shebang, as Dan Jungkuntz likes to say, because God loves this entire world so much that there was no choice but to send me and the Holy Spirit to share the gift of that love. I'm here for salvation and joy and the Holy Spirit is going to ensure that everyone knows that. And Nicodemus' mind is just...blown. He doesn't get it. And Jesus is just kind of like, I know man, things here on earth are hard to understand, so how can you understand heavenly things. Yet, Jesus keeps trying to explain it. God sent me, I'm going to go back to heaven, and then I'm going to send

the Spirit to watch over you and keep it going, what's so hard to understand about that?!

I think what's so hard to understand about it isn't a question of deep theology or analysis. I think, simply, what is so hard to understand about it, the Trinity, is...love. I mean, I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jenn and Kristin love me, love me with their entire selves, love me with the kind of I will put you ahead of myself kind of love. I know because I feel the exact same way, ask me what happened when Kristin and I found out that someone had hurt Jenn's feelings a few weeks ago, whoa man. But the thing is, for as much as I *know* that, I can't always believe it, let alone think that I deserve it. Let's be real, I'm the baby so I have made my fair share of mistakes. I've made them mad, hurt their feelings, done all the sibling things, so yeah, sometimes it's hard to comprehend that they love me that much and it will never change. So yeah, I think what Nicodemus fails to grasp, what we fail to grasp about the Trinity is that God loves us *that much*.

It's one thing to create us, right? To lovingly form us and guide the world into being so that it takes shape in a way where we can survive. It's hard enough to comprehend a God who has known us since before we were born. But then, you throw in Jesus. God loves us so much that God said here is my Son, he is going to guide you, teach you, love you, die for you,

rise for you, so that you can know eternal life and eternal love. And if that wasn't enough, then in blows the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, yeah I can't stay, but you're still going to have an Advocate, someone to watch over you and continue to teach you, who will show you the way to live this crazy thing called faith out. You will never be alone. That is *a lot* of love to take in and process, let alone understand.

We see this play out in Isaiah's call story. This incredible thing happens to him—he is in God's presence when he knows that no one can look upon God and live, and God is saying that he, Isaiah of unclean lips, is the best person to be God's voice in the world. And what is Isaiah's instinct? To be like you have got *the wrong dude*, not because he's unqualified, but because he's unworthy and he lives amongst people who are unworthy and messy, and God is like uhhh yeah, come on, you're who I'm calling. I love your messy self and their messy selves, and they need to hear that and you are the best person to tell them. Isaiah can't believe that God would operate in his life like that, and neither can we most of the time.

Do you ever think about the fact that this is the name we bear as a congregation? Trinity. We have named ourselves after this holy, intimate, and intricate relationship of God, the three in one, the one in three. Do you ever consider what that says to the world around us? That this is the name

we've chosen? It may say, we have chosen the hardest theological concept to understand, so come on in and ask questions. But what if it also said, we have chosen the deepest representation of God's love for us, for *all* of us? That we have chosen to take as our identity all of God's forms, all of the ways that God has shown God's love for us in the world and we are boldly declaring that that is the love that we believe in, trust, and strive to display to our neighbors, our community, our world?

And who knows, maybe you don't think about it at all, but what if we did? What if we dared to take seriously that the name we bear is part of the identity of who we are and who we want to be in the world? What if we dared to say that we are people of holy, intricate, and unending love? What if we dared to say that no matter where you are, what happens, who you are, here is a place where you will find love, love that meets you exactly where you are, whatever that path may be? What if we said we want to love with the depth of a creator, a child, an Advocate? What if we said we want to think about the deepest love we have ever known and that is how we want to live in the world, not just for the sake of ourselves and those whom we know, but for all of God's people, all of God's world, all of our siblings? What if we said, Trinity isn't just about a name, it's an identity, who we are. It's a lifestyle and that lifestyle is unending love? **AMEN!!!**