

1. Why did the leprechaun go outside?

To sit on his paddy-o

10. Why did St. Patrick drive all the snakes out of Ireland?

It was too far to walk

14. What do you call a fake Irish diamond?

A shamrock

16. When is an Irish Potato not an Irish Potato?

When it's a French fry

48. What did the naughty leprechaun get for Christmas?

Pot of coal

- What's the Irish community's answer to Comic-Con? Lepre-Con.

Why did the lepracon decide not to iron his 4 leaf clover?

He didn't want to press his luck.

Q. Why do people wear shamrocks on St. Patrick's Day?

A. Regular rocks are too heavy.

It was mid last month, around the start of the lenten season, when I first

met Jesus on Westcliff Road. You may have seen him—a tan-skinned blond-headed Messiah who lives in a Toyota forerunner that is painted with an array of peculiar prophecies and loosely paraphrased scripture.

“Hi there, I’m Ryan,” I innocently commented upon walking by. “I see that you are a pretty religious guy... keep up the good work spreading the faith.”

“I am Yeshua Ben Yoseph, no one comes to my father but through me!” It was not the response I’d expected; however, playful as I am, I just had to egg him on a bit.

“Oh, wow, Shalom Yeshua. Nah-EEM meh-OHD.” I responded. (Peace to you Jesus, its a pleasure to meet.)

Needless to say my Hebrew was a bit rusty, but that’s okay because, strange as it was, it turns out that Jesus’ was nonexistent. Thus, instead of replying to my salutation, he entered into a rather provocative discourse on the coming of days and sinful death of all humanity. And I must admit, he spoke with enough confidence and background knowledge to earn my ear in listening. Thus I let him go on for several moments all the while watching him

grow more and more passionate in his proclamation until I finally interrupted him in a way which he hadn't anticipated.

“Yeshua, you don't have to convince me...I believe you.”

Needless to say this car-camping Christ was obviously not used to someone supporting his claims, so he fell silent for several seconds before looking me in the eye and stating, “Your faith has saved you...now I want you to walk on water like me.” Then, with a quick glistening smile, he climbed atop of the SUV's roof and

took off a custom shaped 9 ft. surfboard.

“I want you to have this...It’s no use to me, Jesus, because the end is approaching and it cannot be brought into the next life, but at least you can ride it a few times first.”

“Really?” Only in Santa Cruz does Jesus give you a surfboard along with salvation” I thought.

Needless to say, I felt strange accepting such a valuable gift from a homeless man; however, it was a gorgeous piece of craftsmanship and, what can I say, I needed a new

longboard to complete my quiver so I accepted.

“Gee, thank you Yeshua” I replied as I inspected the piece of surfable art. “Your sure that you don’t want to keep it to ride or sell?”

“It is of no use to me, the alpa and omega, the son of man. My time has come and I have no need for worldly possessions.”

“Oh, right. Well if you change you mind just let me know,” and with that and a thank you I put the board under my arm and continued my ride home.

Now I could have just called that homeless man crazy and went about my business with a new surfboard in tote; however, his passionate profession tied in perfectly to this morning's passage.

“Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?” Paul contests to the Corinthians along with an incentive for self-examination.

Now that doesn't mean, per say, that we are all water-walking embodiments of the living Christ as was my homeless friend, but it doesn't mean that we aren't either. Instead, Paul's writing was one of encouragement—

an incentive to recognize our own divinity. So lets break the passage down:

“Examine yourself,” he declares off the get go.

I want to pause there. Paul is not judging the people, nor insinuating that they are being judged by anyone else. Instead he is calling on them to test and judge themselves, because, at the end of the day, the answer is between God and us, not our neighbors, coworkers, fellow congregants or the like. “Examine yourselves and know that Christ is in you.”

Now examine, peirazete in its Greek form, is a little stronger of a word than its synonym, inspect. It means to actually test or tempt oneself—fitting because Lent is the season of temptation, right?

Yes, this is the season that commemorates Jesus' being thrice tempted or tested by Satan in the wilderness, and the wording that that dreaded old devil uses in those temptations is incredibly important.

Let me walk with you through their conversation:

“If you are the son of God than turn these rocks to bread.” Declares the demon... “If you are the son of God, leap from this precipice and be saved,” evokes the adversary. “If you are the son of God, claim dominion over the land” lords the Lucifer. Notice that repeated line:

**“If” you are the child of God then...”
Yes, the reality is that the real temptation is to doubt our own divinity...**

This is where my homeless messiah had it right...he didn't doubt. There was no 'if.' He simply was Jesus—and whereas it sounds a bit crazy, maybe we should all follow suit. Maybe we

should claim our identities as the begotten, blessed and birthed-beings of the big man himself.

Hm. That may be a little much for a St. Patrick's day sermon, so what do you say we turn to Shamrocks instead...

Yes, it is St. Patrick's day here in the ol' land of the living—a day in which the beer and the floral arrangements are both green in recognition, but what in the world do the weeds growing in our garden have to do with anything? And who is this Patron saint Patrick we celebrate?

St. Patrick, or the Apostle of Ireland, was a legendary figure of the fifth century said to have been taken captive by Irish pirates at age 16 only to spend the next six years of his life in isolation and intense spiritual discernment.

Then, upon receiving a divine message that the time had come for him to be freed, he escaped confinement and fled into the wilderness for 28 days before hoping a ship some 200 miles away that took him back to Britain.

It was during that time that he stumbled upon a commonly uncommon patch of three-leafed

clovers that incited a revelation. Those leaves provided a perfect metaphor for the trinity—father, son and holy spirit; each separate in their own way, but at the same time, each interconnected and part of the larger whole—and that is exactly where we are diving in today.

Each leaf symbolized a different facet of our triune God, referenced in Paul's salutation to today's scripture:

“Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell,” he concludes. “Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with

you. Greet one another with a holy kiss as all the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

While all that is great and all, but what makes this season so special is not the three-leafed clovers that are so abundant in the spring, but instead, the rare four-leafed variety.

Now I know what your thinking...Rev. Ryan, there is not another member in the Holy Trinity...hence the name, trinity... stop being blasphemous.

And in saying such you'd be right. Kind of. But the reality is that there is. There is a fourth leaf, a fourth member of the trinity, and that leaf is you! Yes, what makes the four leaf clover so lucky is that it represents the reality that we are each part of the divine experience. We are created by God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and embodiments of Christ whom we lift up this Lenten season... And that certainly sets us apart from the many three leaf clovers of the world. But the elusive four-leaved clover requires a little action on our end...a little searching.

Yes, luck comes in seeking, recognizing, claiming and sharing our true divine identity with the world. With a holy kiss, as Paul proclaims, through which to greet our fellow believers.

Lets pause here again for another vocabulary lesson. That word, Holy, or ἅγιος (hagiō) is important here because it is the same word used to name the Holy Spirit. Thus this is another allusion, used by Paul, representing our having the divine within our own being, waiting to be shared with the world. Again, “Do you not realize Christ is within you?” Our the apostle asks.

Do you not realize that the spirit fills your breath and is waiting to be released, possibly through a Kiss? But not just any kiss, a Holy kiss, a kiss filled with the essence of the third person of the trinity.

Do you not realize that the splendor of God shines through you so that you might light a path of peace and prayer for others.

Quite simply...Do you not realize that your divine?

Now I'm not suggesting that you go around planting kisses on every stranger you meet, for as holy or

unholy as they may be, I can't promise that would go over to well.

That said, they do make those “kiss me, I'm Irish,” shirts if you feel particularly inspired following worship this morning. Heck, you could probably find a Kiss me I'm Christian one on amazon if you really wanted as well...

What I'm saying is that you need to have confidence enough in your unique divine identity so as to build yourself up instead of break yourself down.

Paul's was a message of empowerment to the Church of Corinth. "I write these things while I am away from you," he states in closing. "So that when I come back, I may use the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down."

Yep, you need to allow your faith to be a source and show of strength—a unifier not a divider. Again, a building up, not a tearing down.

True faith is a gift, but much like the auspicious four leaf clover, it is not always so easily found. Faith requires some serious self-examination and

that can be difficult as we are often our own worst critics...

So where do we start?

Why not back with St. Patrick?

Patrick's coming to faith was certainly not a happy tale of frolicking in springtime flowers—instead, as earlier alluded, faith found him while locked away in isolation and uncertainty.

However, he had hope despite his destitute situation. Hope that there was an end and a meaning to his suffering—and there was! God had a plan for Patrick, just the same as God

has a plan for you, but it takes realizing our divinity and finding that lucky clover amidst the worries and waywardness of the world. It takes our consciously joining in the trinity so to be one with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Not because God needs us, but because God delights in us.

With that I want to jump back to the beginning of the service and our opening reading by Scott Hafemann... which I'll read it again because, well, its short and no-one pays attention to the opening reading.

“The existence of fellowship within the Trinity makes it evident that the

creation of mankind was not intended to meet some deficiency in God. (In other words, God is perfectly perfect as a three-leaved enmity.)

“God was not lonely, bored, or incomplete before he created humanity.” Hoffman asserts.

“Instead, God was and is perfect in Himself, happy in the fellowship and love that exist from all eternity between the Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus, rather than being an attempt to make up for a lack within the Trinity, God created mankind simply because he delights in sharing himself as an

expression of his overflowing self-sufficiency.”

That word, delights, is particularly important in today’s message. God created you and I, not because God is insufficient in her divinity, but because he takes pleasure in our existence and company. Yes, you, seated in the pew, are essential in this epic tale we call life and the holy hereafter, not because of God’s insufficiencies, but because you bring your creator joy—and isn’t that what we all yearn for? Joy...

I’ve got a tradition here in Santa Cruz of watching sunsets. Actually, sunsets

are great and all, but what I should say is that I've got a tradition of watching people watch sunsets. Yes, travelers come from all over the world to catch a glimpse of a Santa Cruz sunset.

Now, at last check, I don't know about you, but I didn't have a role to play in the setting of the sun. I don't paint the clouds purple and orange, I don't lower the falling star into the ocean, nor do I send forth silhouettes of seagulls, whose squawks provide a soundtrack to the show as they soar across the open sea. Those are God things.

Instead, my role in the nightly phenomenon is much simpler. To enjoy it! And the reason that I love watching people watch sunsets is because it brings me joy to see people be joyous.

The same is true for God... Whereas God is perfectly capable of orchestrating a sunset—like an artist who paints a masterpiece, the delight comes in watching the watchers appreciate it.

You are indeed an essential part of the the divine triad, after all, you are sitting in the pews of Trinity church, and the task that you are faced with is surprisingly simple, yet not always

easy. You are to bring God delight by enjoying existence!

Furthermore, as Christians, we are each tasked with sharing that joy with the world in any number of ways. It may mean showing up to provide dinner at a shelter with a ladle, a heart full of love and a smile... it may mean letting another car in during a traffic jam... it may mean listening to a friend's problems with a nonjudgemental ear... it may mean most anything, but one thing is true — it requires our delight.

Now we have two weeks left of Lent this year and that is plenty of time for

a little self-examination...a little testing and tempting—and note that you even have the rest of today off, as those crazy catholics christened St. Patricks day as a church-sanctioned cheat-day from their five-week long lenten fasts.

What's holding you back from embracing the luck of the Irish and recognizing your identity as an essence of God? Maybe that is the something you should give up these final weeks of lent.

What scares you the most about looking deep into your own soul and examining your intentions and

**aspirations? What can you do today...
as in this afternoon, in order to bring
God delight? How can you delight in
creation...how can you claim your
divinity?**

**The answer to that question is
between you and your creator;
however I hope you ponder it while
taking a little time to search for a four
leaf clover this afternoon ... because
we all have time to take for something
so serious as our own divine identity.**

**Go in peace my trinitarians and
continue to be blessings to the world.**

