

Religion

God is a baby whose work is never done

By Jim Ryan
 Trinity Sunday
 Matthew 28: 16-20
 May 26, 1991
 A Baby's Work is Never Done

Our five month old baby is the hardest worker in our household. No, this isn't another story about the recession and unemployment.

It's a story about the way babies push out against reality, extending the temporal and spatial limits of their world. (This sounds like a too-serious ad in the Globe and Mail for an ultra-serious job.)

But as Fay Weldon writes in her novel, *The Hearts and Lives of Men*, "... no one has to work harder than babies..." She writes that they have to learn how to touch, to grasp, to sit, to crawl, to stand and to utter their first few words.

(We're not at the sitting, crawling, standing, or first words phase. We've watched the touching and grasping phase. We've been enjoying the endless experimentation, child psychologists call it vocalization, that precedes the first word phase. From my point of view, this experimentation is far richer than the first "Mama" or "Papa".)

Last weekend I was sitting down with my feet up, at rest physically and mentally, a position I enjoy. But I noticed that while baby was also sitting down

with his feet up, he certainly wasn't at rest. He was moving constantly: head, eyes, mouth, tongue, arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet and toes. He was following every sound and movement in the backyard; while at the same time testing his vocal cords, checking out hand-mouth coordination, and doing some leg-ups.

While he was doing all this, discovering his body and his environment, and the relationship between the two, I was just sitting there.

God, if we could only retain some of this constant effort. It is work after all, the work of discovery of self, society and environment.

1. His work is done with good humor. Even if he wakes up with a cold, he wakes up with a smile.

2. His work isn't self-centered. He's constantly sending out connecting links with others. In fact, he's a pretty good barometer for the psychic and emotional pressure in our household.

3. His work isn't selfish. He shares his smiles and laughter freely.

Springtime in Ontario:
 The Ideal Workplace

Combine a five month old infant with springtime in Ontario, and you have a setting for constant delight and discovery. Everything is extraordinary, and every moment is fresh and new. Remember your first encounter with cool green grass on bare



Religion and Reality
 by Jim Ryan

feet, or a delicate red poppy, or a warm breeze, or the sun on bare legs. Of course not. Watch a baby and it will come back.

God is a Baby

Whose Work is Never Done

This is beginning to sound to me like a pretty good metaphor for God.

Usually we picture God as an old man with a long white beard. A good simile if what we want is wisdom and experience. But sometimes wisdom and experience are limiting. Does God want to be wise all the time?

What happens if we picture God as a five month old infant?

If God is five months old, he/she will smile at you and grasp your finger no matter how much you've screwed up in your life.

A five month old God doesn't care if your hair is thin or dirty or unkempt; or if your hands are arthritic or you smell.

If you can smile that's enough. (Wow! There's a work skill: the

ability to smile.)

A five month old God doesn't care if you're unemployed or homeless or haven't paid your taxes in years, or whether you're hooked up to a respirator or have been evicted from a trailer park.

He'll still laugh and spit up on you, and rub his wet hands on your face.

A five month old God will get you up in the middle of the night, even if you have to get up for a job interview in the morning. He'll scream out at you if you forget he's there, even if you have to prepare for your next committee meeting.

And then he'll laugh and kick his legs and wrap his arms

around your neck. Having God wrap his arms around your neck feels pretty good.

Mid-Recession,
 Post-Gulf War Blues

The work of the Trinity is never done, whether that work is as Creator, Redeemer or Consoler. Even in this springtime in Halton Hills, mid-recession, post-Gulf War, God is Creating, and Redeeming and Consoling. God never stops.

What about us? When did we stop creating, redeeming or consoling? Are we too old, or too young, or too untalented, or too uneducated, or too busy to create, redeem or console? I don't believe it.

Empty head or heart?

By REVEREND DALE
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Assistant Pastor of
 Halton Gospel Temple
 Empty Head or Empty Heart

Have you ever been told that you have an empty head? One of my sisters relayed to me an incident involving her three-year-old son in which the above thought was conveyed.

On one particular day, this three-year-old son, Paul by name, was told that he was going to go to Grandma and Grandpa's to spend the night. As with most three-year-olds, he looked forward with great anticipation to sleeping at his grandparent's house.

That night, Paul reached the special destination and before long was sawing logs.

With the first crack of dawn, Paul set his saw aside and scampered to Grandpa's bedroom. Unfortunately, upon arrival, Grandpa still had his saw running in overdrive. This, however, was not going to deter a young, excited grandson from being with his grandfather, so Paul silently slipped in beside sleeping beauty and began his wait.

While waiting, he thought of all the neat things he would do that day. In the midst of his thinking, he took his hand and placed it upon an unsuspecting head, Grandpa's head, most of which is bereft of hair. This early-morning massage quickly revived sleeping beauty and started some conversation.

Suddenly, from the lips of three-year-old Paul came this powerful perception, "Grandpa,

you have an empty head."

What a glorious way for balding grandpa to start his day, to be told that he has an empty head. I'm sure he chuckled and was glad that his grandson's perception was not literally true.

When I heard about this incident, I too chuckled at my nephew's words, but then pondered their true and deeper significance. I considered those in our society who tend to live life with an empty head or rather an empty heart. They pursue people, position and prosperity, yet find in the end that such pursuit is empty and void of fulfillment in the truest sense of the word.

The French mathematician and philosopher, Pascal, echoed this truth when he stated that, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing, but only by God, the creator..." The honest, empty-hearted person will have to admit that Pascal's statement is true because a God-shaped vacuum can never be ultimately filled by people, position or even prosperity. These pleasure-oriented pursuits will always come up short. A God-shaped vacuum can only be filled and satisfied by Creator God.

In John 10:10, Jesus said that He came to give life, and that to the fullest extent. He can and wants to fill the emptiest heart to give true and everlasting fulfillment. Maybe you have never been told you have an empty head, but could it be that you have an empty heart?

Tolerance condemned as passive

By Rev. Ken Yinger
 Pastor, Grace Baptist Church
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Love Beyond Tolerance

In the Herald's Education Week supplement, Sherri Hatfield expressed her concerns about the increased evidence of racism in our society. That concern is well founded.

Racism and prejudice lie very near the surface, and in times of economic stress and constitutional crises they will be even more evident. Prejudice is prejudging. It is making a judgement before one has sufficient knowledge of the person or situation. In a TV age of news stories with no context, of advertisements marketing images rather than realities, and where two-minute editorials are the deepest thoughts we are confronted with, is it any wonder we do not take the time to think

before we act or research before we pass judgement?

The inability to think critically is a root of prejudice. The great civil rights advocate, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., said it best in one of his sermons: "There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think." What many people use as their foundation for relating with those who are different than they are is images they have from hearsay.

When most people think of prejudice, they think of slavery and repression; but what about not renting your basement to an East Indian family, or not letting your daughter marry an Italian? Most prejudice is subtle and most people would say they don't hate anyone. "What's good for them is fine with me." But tolerance is

not the solution to prejudice. Tolerance says, "You do what you want, I'll do what I want, and as long as we don't bug each other, it's OK." Tolerance does not have to think or act. It does not demand we get to know anything about others.

Tolerance never gets to the roots of understanding. Tolerance does not take a Black History course, nor does it try to learn the geography of Central America to understand the Salvadoran next door. Indeed, tolerance can be harmful. Not all ideas and behaviors should be tolerated. Hitler's programme of genocide should never have been tolerated. Drug abuse should not be tolerated; it should be dealt with.

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