

The Feast of The Holy Trinity

May I speak in the name of the Living God who is Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Today is the day when clergy stand in front of their congregations and more often or not struggle to make sense of one of the Great Mysteries of our faith. That great mystery that God is one God but three consubstantial persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit one God in three Divine persons.

We try to come up with illustrations to explain this concept but they are mostly inadequate and generally heretical.

But really the trinity is about one thing and that is relationship

As Christians live Trinitarian lives.

We live, move, and have our being within an understanding of the Trinity.

We pray to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, offering ourselves, our joys and our sorrows, our concerns and our thanksgivings.

We are baptised into new life in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

We are Trinitarian people.

From beginning to end and everything in between, our creation, birth, life, and death, are constituted, sustained, and filled by the Holy Trinity.

So to see this day, this holy feast, as nothing more than a concept of numbers in which one equals three and three equals one is like saying a wedding anniversary is simply the remembrance and celebration of the concept of love.

Concepts, whether of love or the Holy Trinity, rarely, if ever, sustain or transform our lives.

Instead, our lives are sustained and transformed by relationships and by experiences.

Try to define love or explain to your spouse why you love her or him. Make a list, count the ways: you are pretty, smart, funny; we have a lot in common; we enjoy the same things; you are fun to be with; you are a good cook; you have a good job; I am attracted to you; you make me happy.

The list begins to sound shallow, superficial, and you know at a deep level that list does not even begin to reflect your love.

How can words ever describe or capture the beauty and mystery of two lives shared, given, and received?

How do you talk about giving yourself to another so completely that you live within the other, not losing yourself but finding your true and complete self?

Words fail!

Some things, like love, cannot really be talked about. They can only ever be experienced.

Likewise, try to define the Trinity and you end up with nonsensical mathematical equation in which $1+1+1=1$.

Or you hear bad and, most often, heretical analogies:

“God is like an egg and the three persons are the shell, the white, and the yolk of the egg.”

The Trinity is like the three musketeers, all for one and one for all.

At best we are left confused and at worst we decide this whole Trinitarian thing is outdated and irrelevant. How can words ever describe or capture the beauty and mystery of three lives shared, given, and received?

How do you talk about three persons giving themselves to each other so completely that they live within one another, not losing themselves but finding their true and complete self?

Some things, like the Trinity, cannot really be talked about. They can only ever be experienced.

The great news is that we are included in the life and love of the Holy Trinity.

All that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have is being given and made available to us.

Nothing is withheld.

Nothing is secret.

The Feast of the Holy Trinity is the feast of God's life and love united with ours. It is the reality that unity and diversity, the one and the many, are not opposites.

The Trinity is a celebration of sharing, of giving, and receiving each others lives.

The Trinitarian life begins with the three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but does not stop there. It is the ongoing dance of God's being and existence and all are invited to join the dance.

No one is denied an invitation and in God's world everyone knows how to dance.

The Icon you can hopefully see is a depiction of God appearing to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre in the form of three angels who Abraham and Sarah provide with hospitality.

This Icon by Rublev created in the fifteenth century has also become known as the Icon of the Trinity.

And this is why

The figure on the left is dressed in gold a colour symbolising perfection, fullness – the ultimate source – and so represents the Father.

The figure in the middle is dressed in blue – symbolising sea and sky mirroring each other and representing the world – we see God's

presence in the world, the incarnation, and the brown tunic perhaps reminds us of the dust of humanity.

The blue and the brown and the two outstretched figures representing the two natures of Christ; divinity and humanity.

The figure on the right dressed in green represents the Holy Spirit green being a symbol of life and fertility – God bringing life to the world.

But there is an empty seat at the table.

There is an invitation to join the divine table as participant at the banquet and as a partner in God's eternal dance of Love and communion.

So what does it take to step at up to the table and take our place in the eternal dance?

The answer lies, as it does in all things, in relationship and in particular our relationship with Jesus Christ and it what it means to be his disciple.

Christ told us to take up our cross and follow him, those words are only too familiar but maybe they have lost something in their familiarity. These days we seem to shy away from talking about the demands and sacrifices required for Christian discipleship. We are

perhaps generally happier turning Christianity simply into a set of beliefs, disconnected completely from our way of being and from the way we choose to live our lives. In reality many of us struggle to genuinely lead our lives in a distinctively Christian way.

If we choose to live in the way Jesus asks us, we will find that there are costs to be paid and there are sacrifices that need to be made. We shouldn't be surprised at the use of that word sacrifice because we know that sacrifice is true for so many other parts of our lives.

We sacrifice long hours and weekends for a successful career. We sacrifice time, money, and other opportunities to make sure our children get what they need. We know how to make sacrifices and we know what it means to pay the cost.

We do this because these things are important to us. They are priorities for us. They are good and important aspects of our lives and we are right to make sacrifices for them, but in acknowledging that we making these sacrifices we need to face up to some important questions.

What costs are we willing to pay? What sacrifices are we willing to make to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ?

Are we willing to give sacrificially to allow our churches to flourish and the good news of Jesus and all that that means be a true reality in our world?

Through relationship our learning to be like Jesus is not just another priority to be addressed, it is the fundamental priority of our lives and it has deep far reaching consequences for every part of our existence; for our relationships, for our time and how we use it, for our money, our work, our energy, and effort.

No part of our life is left untouched!

And as we contemplate the enormity of that statement let us ask ourselves the question

Am I truly ready to accept God's invitation to fully participate in his life and so join the eternal dance of the Holy Trinity?