

Trinity Sunday

Matthew 28: 16-end

'go therefore and make disciples of all nations and remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Inspiring words to encourage and empower us to share our faith

I wonder what trios you have encountered that have inspired you?

In the early noughties I was lucky enough to go with my brothers to a European Gypsy Jazz Festival held on an island in the River Seine just south of Paris. The variety of music played was fantastic and most of the musicians were playing in trios – guitar or violin, accordion, and percussion of some sort. And whether they were playing in harmony or discordant harmony, they were united as a trio – sometimes playing written music, sometimes improvising - but all the time united in creating a beautiful noise.

In my previous working life as a hospice chaplain, I was a member of a multi-disciplinary team seeking to help our patients and the people who cared for them with a trio of physical, psychological and spiritual care. Team work from the medical staff, the social & family support workers and the chaplains - offered a team approach to helping patients on their journey towards a hopefully symptom-controlled, peaceful death.

So, back to thinking about the trio this Sunday in the church's year is named after. Trinity Sunday celebrates and commemorates a doctrine and theology rather than a sacred historical event. As we are invited deeper into the mystery of God, who is three yet one, we are reminded of the fullness of God's character and the rhythm and rule of God.

The disciples had always known that there was only one God.

But after the resurrection and their Pentecost experience they were aware of God working in them and they had a different attitude to Jesus.

To affirm that Jesus is Lord is to say that he is divine; but they hadn't previously quite grasped this.

To say the spirit was in them created challenges too, but they could not deny their own experience of Pentecost.

So whilst it had seemed that there was a possibility that there three Gods, they knew there was only one.

So the seeds of the idea of a Trinity are in the New Testament, but Christians went on to wrestle with the concept for more than four hundred years, argued about it in the marketplace and even came to blows in Synod.

Eventually though, they found a formula that expresses the idea of the Trinity, but doesn't explain it. Three persons in one substance or one energy as we'd probably say today.

You can never totally understand it, but within this very complex idea is insight.

The experience that God is Abba, and that God is in Christ and that God is within each of us through the gift of his Holy Spirit is key to the Christian life.

The idea that God is Father and Son and Spirit is the most profound knowledge we have been given.

God is beyond us, beside us, and within us through his holy spirit. God is source and goal and guide – creating, redeeming and enabling.

The Trinity is mystery, and we need this reminder that God is beyond us always more than we can grasp. We can rejoice that Jesus is the friend of sinners, but important too that we don't get too pally – variety in worship is important but important too that we don't lose the mystery.

God is beyond us; we need to recover humility before him, and we need to make sure there are pathways to awe and wonder in our worship.

God is described as father, son and holy spirit but we must never forget that god is one.

The imperative of the Trinity is that we work for all that heals and unites, and against all that divides and destroys.

Pope Leo's recent words on the dangers of AI sound a timely warning.

I quote from his recently published "Magnifica Humanitas"

"So called artificial intelligences do not feel joy or pain, do not mature through relationships and do not know from within what love, work, friendship or responsibility mean. They may imitate language, behaviour and analytical skills, or even simulate empathy and understanding, but they do not understand what they produce for they lack the affective, relational and spiritual perspective through which humans grow in wisdom.

By simulating human voices and faces, wisdom and knowledge, empathy and friendship the systems known as AI interfere with and encroach upon the deepest level of communication, that of human relationships.”

The pope also invoked J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord Of The Rings character Gandalf when he urged people to do their part to build a *"civilization of love"* amid the threat of AI.

The idea of the Trinity teaches us that the heart of creation is active love. The concept of the Trinity calls us to work at being loving in all our relationships - and frequently asking 'what is the loving thing to do in this situation' and then doing it. Finding others to work with to build a community of love. Is key.

Our Lord God and Creator tasks us with continuing to make disciples and gives us the promise of his presence with us. Not a, go and do this on your own, rather an invitation to come and join the making, creating God who continues to bring rhythm to the world and rhythm to those who are willing to listen and move in sync.

There is something profoundly immediate about the call to make disciples of all nations, and we need to remember that if we are to live out Jesus' teachings that forbid violence and retribution. Our call is to love our neighbours rather than to dominate, dehumanise or even destroy them. All authority belongs to no-one other than Jesus, who is none other than the Prince of Peace.

The command to baptise those coming into the community of the Church in the name of the loving Community of God is important and explicit. The Trinity expresses the dynamic diversity that exists in God and shows us the fullness and richness of a life lived in the way and rhythm of the God who is with us until the very end of the age in our commission to go and make disciples of all people.

A prayer to close:

Enfolding God,
Trinity of love,
You are our source, our goal, our life:
May we be born again in You
no more to live
alone and unconnected,
but sharing in the Spirit's breath
and carried to Your heart;
through Jesus Christ, who lifts us up.

Amen