

Trinity Sunday, Pentecost 1, Year C

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31, Romans 5:1-5, John 16:12-15

Have you ever used an online tutor to learn how to cook a particular dish, or maybe to learn the correct fingering for a piece of music?

Well, we Christians have an online tutor for our faith. Jesus says that the Spirit of truth will guide us into all the truth. And he says that all that belongs to the Father is his.

Now it's too easy to think of this like a bucket chain, passed from Father, to Son, to Holy Spirit at the bottom. But it's not like that. These three, Father, Son and Spirit are intrinsically and intimately linked as one in a tri-unity partnership, the Trinity. No wonder that Holy Spirit will speak the words of Jesus and these words are actually the Father's. Because there is only one God, not three. There is both unity and partnership in the Godhead.

What image do you have of the Trinity? Do we actually have any sort of grasp of the Trinity? Obviously, as Peter said last week, any understanding we do have will be imperfect.

It is so difficult to have a concept of the Trinity because nothing in our world equates to the divine three-in-one. St Patrick used a shamrock but this analogy is poor. It suggests a three-headed god.

Theologian Karl Rahner wrote that most Christians are almost mere "monotheists", one God people, not Trinitarian at all, because in practical everyday life they - and maybe we - believe in one God only, just one of the three.

Is that you? Are you a one-of-the-Trinity-only kind of person? Think about it.

We need to get our heads round the concept of Trinity in order to avoid thinking of a hierarchy, or of three Gods, or of God in different forms, rather like Clark Kent and Superman – one thing or the other, but never both at the same time.

Leonardo Boff in his book, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, writes,

'The three divine Persons are related in such a way that they lovingly permeate one another so radically and so completely, that they constitute a single God.'

I like that.

The card you have is an attempt to represent visually perichoresis, this divine dance of the Trinity. And note how it also expresses Boff's statement about the loving permeation within the Trinity. Because the image taken as a whole is a heart, conveying the unity of the one God who is love.

And we are invited to join the dance! To partner with the Trinity.

Holy Spirit is the intimate relationship link between us and the Father, us and the Son. Holy Spirit is our online help, the reason that we can partner with Father and Son in God's work on earth, just as Jesus did.

You know, I can never read our gospel passage today without also thinking of verses in John 5 (19 & 20):

The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he does.

Because it is echoed in our gospel (John 16:15):

All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.

And the extraordinary thing is that in some way this puts us in the same position as Jesus. In fact, the whole of our gospel reading sets us up to be like Jesus, relating to the Father as Jesus did, doing what Jesus would do.

I expect you have heard that poem by St Teresa of Avila that begins

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours ...

And we must ask, do we actually want to be Jesus's hands and feet? To be as Jesus was on the earth with healings and miracles, here in and around West Linton, evidences of the kingdom of God come near?

You know, I have realised that since I moved to Scotland I have lowered my expectations. Partly because I am no longer a member of a "Treasure Hunting" or "Healing on the Streets" team or part of the group that is available in Costa at a designated time ready for anyone who approaches wanting prayer. Of course, lockdown hasn't helped.

But I've started to get my mojo back as it were, to develop thoughts, to raise my sights, to begin to long again for us together to do what Jesus did, to be who Jesus was.

Markie and I have discussed having a "Try Praying" stall at the monthly Saturday market with the Try Praying banner evident and the Try Praying books to hand out; where we would be available to talk to people, take prayer requests or even pray with people then and there.

We wonder, would anyone else be up for that? Would you? Please let us know.

There is, of course, associated commitment and hard graft in doing what the Father is doing. It is a step beyond wanting and praying for people to come into our church services.

Jesus said to his disciples, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”* (Matthew 16:24)

Suffering, even if only minor, such as our time not being our own, goes with the territory of being Jesus on earth.

And, you know, suffering can be a good thing! We heard in our reading from Romans 5(:3) that Paul encourages us to glory – revel - in our sufferings just as we revel in the hope of the glory of God.

Revel in sufferings? Huh? Well, it goes with the territory.

It goes with the Spirit coming to guide us into all the truth, receiving from Jesus so that we can be Jesus, the body of Christ here, now.

And it has benefits. (Romans 5:3, 4):

... suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope

Suffering makes us stronger, more committed, more confident people. And so it increases our hope in God. It draws us into a closer more intimate relationship.

Because as we walk more closely with Holy Spirit we experience more of God’s love, not because he loves us more but because a closer relationship with him allows us to appreciate it more.

So we welcome the suffering – the necessary self-denial of the things we want to do and the rebuffs - that come as a result of flowing with the Spirit. Because in the long run it increases our intimacy with God, our partnership with him and our joyful, confident expectation of the glory of God.

So let us ask ourselves three things.

First, do we give Holy Spirit the same reverence and respect that we give God the Father and Jesus Christ? Or we do regard him as somewhat nebulous – here and yet not here?

Secondly, do we accept the challenge of being Jesus to the community in which we live? Do we want to take the good news of the kingdom out of the church building to the people around us and share it in the way that Jesus did?

And if so, thirdly, are we prepared to suffer the cost? Are we prepared to give of our time and our comfort, and risk rebuff, in order to work with Jesus to do the Father’s work? Amen

Chris Shaw 12.6.2022



PERICHORESIS

