

Year A, Trinity Sunday 31st May 2026

Genesis 1:1-2:4a. 2 Cor 13:11-13. Matthew 28:16-20.

Two's company, three's a crowd, so they say

I think someone forgot to tell God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Would they even say three makes a crowd? The saying less is more is definitely not for them.

Far greater minds than mine have been responsible for the pulping of thousands of tons of trees and the spilling of tons of ink down the centuries attempting to explain the doctrine of the Trinity of God as Three in One and God as One in Three – and failing to do so satisfactorily.

You will be relieved I am not even going to try to pronounce on the doctrinal intricacies this morning. There are several good reasons, not least it took the Early Church Fathers the best part of four centuries to determine what they meant by a Trinitarian God – and sadly we haven't got that long.

Furthermore, my SEC betters would undoubtedly tell me I had got it wrong, and finally I would probably confuse myself and send you to sleep.

That doesn't mean there aren't useful things to say about the Trinity, but they are far more to do with relationship and community than deep theological insights.

Perhaps the simplest way of putting it is that we cannot know the Trinity intellectually, but we can experience the Trinity in our lives and in our hearts. We understand God as being triune when we encounter him as those disciples did on the day of Pentecost. Let me try and explain why.

Well let's start with the idea that we believe God is the most perfect, the most truly good, the most beautiful thing we can possibly imagine. We also proclaim that God is love and rightly so. As it says in I John 4, God is love and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. But if we say, as indeed we do in the Creed that God is Trinity, our eyes start to glaze over.

Yet it was Saint Augustine who said If you see love you see Trinity. How so?

Well perhaps John 3:16 provides us with some sort of answer For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that everyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. In other words, in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the Father has acted out of love through the power of the Holy Spirit to save the world.

So God the three are in relationship with each other. They are connected. Richard Rohr, who I have mentioned many times before, describes it as the divine dance, where one member of the Godhead pours out their love into the second, who turn, having received that outpouring, passes it onto the third and so on – like a perpetual motion water wheel at a mill.

Where there is room for three there is always room for a fourth, you or me or anyone who wants to join the divine dance

And that is the point. Because we all, you and me, are invited to join in this divine dance, we are all welcome at the feast, welcome at the table. Father, Son and Holy Spirit will never reject us if we ask to join in.

The only people who can't have their own dance with the Trinity as their partners are those who deliberately choose to stay off the dancefloor, so my analogy is, I hope, similar to the parable Jesus told of those who found pressing things to do when invited to the banquet.

Of course, my analogy is incomplete, like every Trinitarian analogy, whether comparing it to a three-leafed shamrock or John Wesley's idea of three candles but one light, or the sun, star, heat and light.

We can see the truth of the Trinity even if we can't grasp it in all its fulness.

What the Trinity does above all is point us to connectedness and relationship. Not only are the Trinity connected but God built that same desire for connectedness into our DNA because God decided to make us in his own image.

Yet we live in a world where people seem to be deliberately rejecting that connectedness, with people becoming more inward-looking, to put it as politely as I can, or self-centred with little concern for others for the big issues of the day. For instance, there is our self-centred treatment of the environment. I don't want to get into the arguments about climate change, but

just look at our exploitation of natural resources, our careless attitude to other species and our general wastefulness.

That sort of behaviour has nothing to do with the grace, love and fellowship that our Corinthians reading calls us to show to the rest of the world

Nor is it the sort of dominion that God was talking about in our Genesis reading and it's the sort of thing you would hope people, whether Christians or not, might be thinking about.

Genesis tells us that God deliberately chose to create men and women 'in our own image'. It's far too big a stretch to claim that that was written at the time as a deliberate pointer to the Trinitarian nature of God, but it does remind us that God is all about relationship.

We know that God is wonderfully extravagant in terms of pouring out his love, but God is not wasteful or destructive, and our calling is to reflect God's image as best we can in word and deed, in our outlook and our countenance. You know when you meet someone filled with the joy of the Lord and you think to yourself, I'd like some of that.

Part of the Good News is that all of us are invited to have a love affair with God, whatever we may feel about ourselves, and it's in sharing the excitement of a love affair that we will make disciples of the rest of the world, not by some academic explanation of the Trinity or some other obscure doctrine.

Indeed, our Gospel reading says we have been commissioned in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to act as God's agents and spread the Good News – in other words to tell people that a divine dance with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is always available and that it doesn't matter if you think you've got two left feet or two right feet because your dance partners are always there to pick you up.

Now the Greek equivalent of the divine dance is perichoresis, which British theologian Alister McGrath describes as allowing the individuality of each member of the Godhead to be maintained, while at the same time insisting that each shares in the life of other two.

And that fundamentally is how we are called to live, as individuals who share in the lives of those around us – particularly the 'other', those who are

oppressed, overlooked, ignored, those who are different – and not just to live in our own silos. Because God is not a God who turns up just in our silo, he turns up among us all for all our sakes.

I just want to comment briefly on the very last words of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus's final promise to his disciples. I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.

We shouldn't take that to mean that Jesus is on our side, or that he is talking about our personal salvation, but rather that he is always around, he is always present, calling to us from among those who are suffering.

In conclusion, let me try and summarise what I have been trying to say. 'Getting' the Trinity involves encounter with God, whether with the Father, Son or Holy Spirit, not intellectual knowledge.

At its heart, the Trinity is about connectedness, and connectedness has similarly been built into us as we are made in God's image,

The Good News is we are ALL invited to the divine dance, to connect directly to the Father Son, and Holy Spirit.

As his disciples Jesus has also called us to connect to those for whom his heart aches. Those are the ones he wants us to invite to the dance. May we hear – and act on – his call.