

Trinity Sunday May 30<sup>th</sup>

Today in Church, on Trinity Sunday we celebrate the Triune God. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as revealed in Scripture. The God of endless love, incarnate in Jesus Christ and active through the power of the Holy Spirit in people of faith today.

Yet, the Doctrine of the Trinity is not found in Scripture. You will not find the word Trinity in your Bible. The meaning of Trinity is derived from the study of the Gospels.

The Doctrine of the Trinity is the Church's effort to explain the mystery of God's endless grace demonstrated in the Gospel and experienced by those of Christian faith.

Wayne Grudem, an American Systematic Theologian and author repeatedly informs us that God is three persons, each person fully God, and that there is only one God.

But are we happy to let God be defined by the Trinity in this way? The American theologian and author Daniel Migliore asks: Are we called to abandon all logic and reason to accept Church authority, understanding and definition of the Trinity? A word after all that cannot be found in the bible.

**Can our understanding of the Trinity serve any purpose?**

Is the doctrine of the Trinity, as expressed by the early Church fathers, rooted in history, capable of understanding today's world?

**In other words, is the doctrine of the Trinity still relevant today?**

Our understanding of the Trinity took shape in the fourth century. At the Council of Nicea in AD 325 and the Council of Constantinople AD 381, the Father, Son and Spirit were recognised as one God in the same essence, but distinguished in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

These councils recognised that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit always existed as one, and were not created by the Father as some early Christians believed, like Arius Bishop of Alexandria (He argued that God first existed without Christ or the Spirit being present).

If we read John 3:16 in the King James version of the Bible we read:

**‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’.**

We learn that in the Trinity, that the Father begets, the Son is begotten from the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeds. Trinity can be described as one God in three persons where one Begets, one is Begotten, and one Proceeds.

Bishop Augustine, a fifth century theologian and Father of the early church referred to this relationship as: God the Lover: Jesus Christ the beloved: With the Holy Spirit flowing from both the Father and the Son and binding them together.

One God, three distinct persons.

The German theologian Jurgen Moltmann explains that the Gospels give witness to a ‘Divine love story’ between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All who believe are invited to share in this divine love story.

Three distinct, yet united persons. The biblical narrative of God’s reconciliation of the world through his Son Jesus Christ and of God’s bringing Salvation to humanity through the power of the Holy Spirit. Catherine LaCugna, a feminist Catholic theologian from the last century explains the Trinity as ‘The experience of being saved by God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit’.

**All scripture confirms that there is only one God, present in three persons.**

In Deuteronomy 4:35 We are told that ‘The Lord is God: besides him there is no other’. There is only one God.

In Ephesians 4:6 We learn that ‘There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The Holy love of the Father, the Sacrificial love of the Son, and the transformative power of the Spirit.

I want to leave you in no doubt that evidence for the Trinity can be found throughout the Bible.

For example, in Genesis 1 we read that 'In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth'.

In John 1: 1-4, it reads 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all people'.

We know that Christ is the light of all people. Christ is the Word. Christ, the Word and the light that gave life to all of creation.

In Genesis 1:2 it reads 'Now the earth was formless, and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.'

The Triune God is revealed in Creation. God created the world, through his Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit present and active in creation.

The Triune God lives as Father, author of creation, the Son as redeemer, who died on the cross, and the Spirit as Sanctifier, consecrating whoever believeth in Jesus Christ. These people who believe shall not perish but have eternal life, as promised in John 3:16. Creation, Redemption and Sanctification, provides further evidence of the Triune God.

You may also have heard the Trinity described as the 'Economy of the Trinity'. The word 'economy' which simply refers to the 'Ordering of activities' and how these three persons related to the world in their primary functions. God is author of creation, the Son redeems the world, through his life, death and resurrection and the Spirit transforms all who believe.

**But even if we accept the reasoning and logic of the Trinity and accept the evidence of the Trinity found in the Bible, can we demonstrate that the trinity is still relevant today?**

So great is the love and desire of God to be reconciled to us, his creation, he was prepared to give up his Son upon the cross so that we our lives would be redeemed and our lives transformed by his Spirit. This scripture helps us to recognise what motivates God to love us as one God in three persons.

We learn that the Triune God is not threatening or forceful. But creative, sacrificial and empowering. God does not dominate but shares his life with others, in communion. God challenges our understanding of divine and human power. God in his sovereignty seeks to work in partnership with us, and not to dominate us. We must be

careful not to judge God, or ever expect him to behave within the confines of our flawed standards.

So far, we have described God as Trinitarian, Triune, one God, in three persons, Creator, Redeemer and Transformer; The one who begets, one who is begotten and one who proceeds. We have heard God called the Lover, the Beloved and the one who binds the first two in love. But to understand the Trinity personally, we must dig beneath the many historic titles and heated debates. We are must learn to discover and honour the Trinity for ourselves and not simply repeat a belief that we do not understand.

We must understand that the Triune God has authorised creation, been crucified, has risen from the dead, so that all who believe may be redeemed. All who believe accept the Spirit sent from God and are given the gift of eternal life. If we accept the triune God, we begin to understand the full extent of his love for us.

The Triune God demonstrates that he seeks a shared life in Communion with us. God does not seek to dominate or manipulate us. We learn that God shares his self, gives great value to his creation and seeks to live in a community created in love.

I have witnessed the Triune God at work here in St. Peters. During the Interregnum, I have seen the PCC step up and take greater accountability for the affairs of this Church. I have seen the Worship team step up, create new services and introduce us to new speakers and brilliant weekly musicians.

St. Peter's has created a Parish Profile and reconsidered how to serve Church members and the wider community. As the many components of St. Peter's have each stepped up during the interregnum to hold the Church together, each member has sought to live in community and not dominion over the other members. This I believe is evidence of the Trinity in action. One body of believers, serving one God, as one loving community.

I am optimistic of what St. Peter's will achieve now and even more hopeful of what will be achieved when your new Vicar is appointed. So, is the Trinity still relevant today? Yes, the Trinitarian God is present as long as we, us, you and I, continue to serve God and each other in loving partnership, in full communion and in total freedom.

Amen.