



St Marylebone
Parish Church



Trinity Sunday 2019

*Glory be to the Father, who has adopted us as his children;
Glory be to the Son, who has given us new life;
Glory be to the Holy Spirit, who inspires us to live in Christ,
To the glory of God, the Blessed Trinity.*

Today is Trinity Sunday, the day on which we celebrate the defining feature of our faith – the fact we worship God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three equal persons, one God from all eternity.

This doctrine of almighty God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is, however, as one theologian has helpfully put it, less about complex theology than our potential to engage with God and God with us: an engagement revealed in the flesh of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit who draws us to the loving heart of the Father.¹

Julie Andrews, that consummate theologian, once said – or rather sang – that the best place to start is “at the very beginning”.

And for people of faith, whatever that faith might be, the beginning is always prayer. Not necessarily words (indeed, more usually than not, not words) but the conscious act of placing oneself in relation to another – in this instance God.

This way of being in relationship allows God to fill us with God’s love and life, and enables us to live out God’s love and life wherever it is, and in whatever the circumstance in which we find ourselves – and I mean in whatever circumstance: in joy, or sorrow; in anger or despair; in times of elation or desolation; when we are confused or frightened or

just need the presence of the One-who-is-in-all-things; discovering a deep sense of being held in Gods love and with that a passionate desire to return that love.

St Ignatius of Loyola, one of the greatest of all pray-ers, described in a prayer something of what it felt like for him when he knew deeply moments of deep mutual indwelling relationship, moments when mere human beings know themselves to be living freely and unreservedly in God's perfect love:

*take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding, and my entire will
all that I have and call my own.
You have given it all to me.
To You, Lord, I return it.
Everything is Yours; do with it what You will,
Give me only Your love and Your grace.
That is enough for me.*

Such times might be rare, very rare, and all we can usually offer to God is a sense of our frustration – but the wonderful thing is, is that that is enough!

Michael Ramsey, when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, was once asked, in a television interview, how long he prayed for. The interviewer was appalled when the archbishop replied, 'maybe for twenty or thirty seconds' – but Michael Ramsey went on to add, 'but sometimes it can take me 30 or 40 minutes to get there!'

Our praying is never going to be neat or tidy. How could it be living world that is in perpetual turmoil – when *our* lives are in perpetual turmoil, full of confusions and contradictions? But our praying to the Father, in the power of the Spirit, through the Son, enables us to bring those confusions into the very heart of divine life and love and, as the Welsh poet-priest R S Thomas writes,

It is the plain facts and natural happening that conceal God

and reveal Him to us little by little under the minds tooling.ⁱⁱ

God is in all things; in everything around us, waiting to be revealed through the privileged moments of insight that we are, sometimes, however fleetingly, granted.

God's living, loving all-embracing presence is to be found in everything - in all that we see and experience and, indeed, are.

God did not create all that is long ago - and then step back; the divine work of creation goes on - in every minute and in every moment - and God invites us both *into* that dynamic love *and* to live it; to become *co-creators* as well as the *curators* of all that has been brought forth in God's love by the power of the Holy Spirit through God the Son.

Our relationship with God is very unlikely to be plain sailing, which if any relationship can be?, but through the discipline of regular prayer (and prayer does require a persistent and tenacious discipline) we are granted glimpses of the Almighty; given strength, words to say, insight, grace, so that we become not only more and more conscious of God's presence in all things, but that we enter more and more fully into that mutual relationship of love which is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This is the great truth revealed in Andrei Rublev's icon of the Trinity written in the 15th century.

In that icon, the Holy Trinity is portrayed by the presence of three angelic beings sitting around what appears to be an altar with a chalice upon it. There is a space, left for us – we are invited in; invited to sit down and eat and drink (as we are at this altar); we are being invited into relationship, to become part of the dynamic calling life and love of God, the Three in One and One on Three.

By giving our hearts and lives to God, we take on a 'God-shape'; gradually, hesitatingly, fitfully becoming aware of God in all things, finding God in a new-blooming rose, the gentle touch of a loved one, the outstretched hand of a broken relative or friend or stranger;

discovering God in the plain facts and natural happenings that both conceal God and reveal God to us little by little.

Robert Wright, who was a canon of Westminster for many years, said, *when our prayer reaches the heart we shall find our desire altered. We shall discover a love of God within us that perhaps we were unaware of before. We shall give praise and rejoice because we shall want to be with God, to serve Christ and to live in the Spirit. Then, with Dame Julian of Norwich we shall pray, God, of Your goodness give me Yourself, for You are enough for me and may I ask nothing that is less than may be full worship of You. And I ask anything that is less, I am always wanting but only in You I have all.*

It is only in God that we can have all, no matter how hard we might search and look elsewhere!

But until we discover that it is only on God that we have all, nothing else will ever satisfy us.

We need to keep on praying, keep on living and loving and to step into that place around the table which Father, Son and Holy Open have reserved for us.

And so God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed all might, majesty, glory and dominion for ever and ever.
Amen.

ⁱ Reverend Robert Wright *Canon of Westminster*, Sunday, 22nd May 2005

ⁱⁱ Emmerging, Thoma, R S., from his collection of poems *Laboratories of the Spirit*, 1975