

# Christchurch on-line, Trinity Sunday

## Sunday 7th June 2020

Well, here we are on Trinity Sunday  
and we've got a good few more Trinity Sundays to come.

Have you got the idea of the Holy Trinity sussed out yet?  
Three-in-One and One-in-Three. Have you?

Recently I went to a Harvester restaurant with two Sailing Club  
pals. We had to queue.

When our turn came at the front of the queue, the  
manageress approached, glanced briefly at us and asked me:

“Are you one person or three?”

As we sat having our meal, I couldn't help  
wondering how many patrons ever said they were one-in-three or  
three-in-one, and could they perhaps have a bigger table!

I want now to explore this doctrine of the Trinity on two levels:

What does it mean for my understanding of *God*?

What does it mean for my understanding of *myself*?

As a teenager I was fond of a girl called Sue. One day I went to  
her home and we were chatting with her Mum. Somehow we got  
talking about God, as teenagers in those days so readily did. And I  
asked Sue's Mum, “What is God”. Without flinching she said,  
“God is love. It's there in the Bible.” (*1 John 4:8*).

But this word “*love*” is too easily *misused*.

*Self-love* - the love of just *one*,

isolated, alone, turned in upon oneself - is not true love.  
The key thing about love is *relationship*,  
looking *outward*, looking *beyond oneself*.

So **God is love** in that He is not merely a single person, loving himself,  
but a *trinity* of persons, coequal, coeternal, *loving each other*:

the *Father*, revealed in the Old Testament;

the *Son, Jesus Christ*, foreshadowed in the Old Testament,  
and then clearly seen in the New Testament;

the *Spirit*, mentioned in the Gospels, cryptically, in hints,  
and then seen dramatically active in the life of the Church,  
as we read in the Book of Acts and in the Epistles.

So the Christian God is not simply a unit... but a *union*.  
Not simply one isolated eternal being, but communion,  
one-in-three.

Three persons dwelling in each other in an eternal circle of love,  
in an unceasing movement of reciprocal relationships.

So this is the first thing to say about the Holy Trinity:  
it's a way of saying that God is love -  
not *self-love* but *mutual love*.

However, this circle of divine love is not a *closed* circle.  
It moves *continually outwards*.

It's *self-giving* – and it can't do that within just a closed circle.

(pause)

Now, if that's what Trinity tells us about *God*,  
what does it tell us about *ourselves*?

In Genesis 1: 26 we read,  
'God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness".  
The creation of humankind is the *joint act*  
of all three persons of the Godhead.  
We are created not just in the *image of God*,  
but specifically *in the image*  
*of the Trinity*.

So if *we* are going to be truly and fully human, if *we* are going to  
enter into the wholeness of human personhood,  
we are going to have to live according to the model of the Trinity.  
*We* will live in outpouring, overflowing *mutual* love.

This will mean self-giving... even sacrifice.

(pause)

I was Rector of a beautiful church on Exmoor, in the village of  
Luccombe, which for years had had an outstanding Flower Festival  
that attracted coachloads of people from far away. It was  
amazing.....

.....but it wasn't Luccombe. It was big women from a  
neighbouring village who had "taken over" Luccombe church and  
made it **their** very special festival.

There was little love in that. And very little opportunity for  
Luccombe people to express themselves.

Well, just before I became their Rector, there was a big showdown about the Flower Festival and the outsiders left.

And I had the joy of sharing in and encouraging a most wonderful, loving, generous team of Luccombe village people who set about planning their own local, indigenous, very Luccombe Flower Festival.....

....and the conversations overflowed...

....and the laughter overflowed...

...and the love overflowed...

....and the ideas overflowed ....

And you couldn't really tell who had had the biggest part in getting the whole thing done...

...because, with all the overflowing, everybody had helped each other...

...and those who'd never done an arrangement before, but wanted to have a go, were helped and shown how by the others...

...and if one person had got some lovely foliage in her garden, she'd get it for the girl who lived in a flat and had no garden.. and so on...

All the overflowing, boundary-crossing, spilling-over love and laughter and natter, helped rebuild that community and bring people so close that they found each other anew.

New people. New village, really.

It was a tremendous Flower Festival and all the village came and enjoyed it – even lots of the menfolk!!!

(pause)

Reflecting the overflowing of the borders of their being  
just like the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
those Luccombe people reached out beyond themselves

and became a new and stronger unity,  
a true **comm-unity**.

(pause)

The real point about the Trinity is that it's not a theological statement....

.....it's an *invitation*, even in lockdown,  
to be like them,  
finding your identity by letting go of the boundaries  
and giving yourself in love and being and doing  
to and with the others around you...

May God bless you in *reflecting* his Trinity image -  
*overflowing* love.

Amen