

Trinity Sunday Year B

One of the themes of Trinity Sunday is *images of God*.

Many of us are brought up to see the Lord as a kind of irascible headmaster who needs constant appeasement. Some of us think of the Lord as a judge, or a lover, or a teacher, or an indulgent daddy, or ... the list is endless. Interestingly, researchers have found that on the whole the people who tend to see the Lord as a judge are those who are quick to judge. Those who tend to see the Lord as a teacher are teachers. Those who tend to see the Lord as an indulgent daddy are indulgent daddies ... and so on. We have a tendency to make the lord in our own image. Trinity Sunday pulls us up sharp about this. In the OT lesson we have a picture of the Divine as a Lord-of-the-Rings type fantastic creature. Nothing like any of us. Nothing like anything we've seen.

The doctrine of the trinity is only hinted at in Holy Scripture but the elements are there:

- Creator of the universe – father
- Emissary to earth to show us how to live – son
- Inspirer to continue this after the ascension – spirit

The image of God as Trinity is impossible to grasp in its fullness. At All-Age services, we might take water, ice and steam as three versions of the same thing. Or we might talk of a three-sided mountain. These are only approximations, but they'll do for the moment. If you've read *The Shack* (and if you haven't you should) the Father appears in that sometimes as a woman and sometimes as a man (gender is irrelevant to the Divine), the Son as a middle-aged man in a plaid shirt, and the spirit as a somewhat insubstantial Asian woman you can see through and sense rather than feel or touch.

God is love, we're told, and theologians talk of three 'persons' of mutual love. We've been hearing quite a lot from John's Gospel recently, in which Father and Son/Word create and exist together before creation. After the Ascension, Father gives the world the Spirit, in place of Jesus. John describes the three components of the trinity existing and interacting within love.

If you find this difficult, join the club and never mind. Trinity Sunday reminds us that our human notions of the infinite and divine are inadequate. Let's just leave it at that. After all, we accept our inability to know what happened at the big bang. We accept our ignorance of the fact that we don't know exactly how electricity works (what exactly does it do to electrons in the outer ring of the atoms of the conductor metal?). We accept that we do not know what happens in the smallest particles of which we are made, or biological processes ...

What we can do is respect the Divine lord (or fear him in Biblical language), and we can try and align our wills with his. We are all made in God's image, we all have a bit of God inside us. All we have to do is stop resisting that God-within, and let the God-within expand to fill our skins from the inside. At a time like this in our national and personal lives, this message has some resonance: forget the evil advertising industry that tells us that consumption is the cure-all for our ills. It isn't. Like Nicodemus, we need to accept that a new start is necessary (being born again in Gospel language), a shedding of old attitudes, and a realisation that we are not in control. We need to trust ourselves into the hands of the Divine. Jesus said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. This doesn't mean we pick up an extra burden that he lays upon us—it means we set down the burden of consumerism and consumption and then walk on our way lighter, trusting in the Lord. That seems as if there is hardly any burden at all—and maybe there isn't.

The important thing is not how the Trinity works, but just that it does. Today's readings tell us that we may be unworthy (Old Testament Isaiah lesson), but that the spirit makes us worthy. The Gospel tells us (God so loved the world etc) that Jesus came to us to show the way. God became human so that we might become divine. After all, the Christmas Gospel (In the beginning was the word ...) tells us that we have the power to become sons and daughters of God by following in his steps. The 'being born again' of Nicodemus is a rebirth into trust rather than certainty. Trust the complexity and the multifaceted Holy, Blessed and Glorious Trinity.

A very happy Trinity Sunday to you all.