

## Trinity Sunday Year C

Schoolmaster: Now you're sure you've got the Catechism all buttoned up, Foster?  
Foster: I'm still a bit hazy about the Trinity, sir.  
Schoolmaster: Three in one, one in three, perfectly straightforward. Any doubts about that see your maths master.

- Does the existential phrase *εγώ εἰμι* imply sameness? 'it's i alludes to YHWH, thus identifying Jesus with the God of old.
- Jesus, though, nowhere says 'I am my Father'. He *goes to* the Father (14:12), and he *prays to* the Father (14:16). The Father is glorified *in* the Son not *as* the Son (14:13). Jesus is subject to the will and purpose of God (10:30), and to God's command (20:21). Jesus acts at the Father's behest.
- Son and Father are one in being and action (10:30), because the Father has willed it so, not because the Son takes it upon himself (5:30)

Father and Son/Word (and wisdom) create and exist together before creation,

John describes the three persons existing and interacting within love (17:23) in such a way as to *suggest*, if not explicitly state, unity of substance. And God is love. What could be more Trinitarian?

'The native place of heat, the quality in us answering to this fire, is the heart, and the Heart of the Church is the Holy Ghost. These two join to this work, Christ to give the tongue, the Holy Ghost to put fire into it. For as in the body natural the next, the immediate instrument of the soul is heat, whereby it worketh all the members over, even so in the mystical body, a vigour there is like that of heat, which we are willed to cherish, to be "fervent in the Spirit" [cf Rom 12:11], "to stir" [cf Tim 1:6] and to blow it up [cf 1 Thessalonians 5:19]; which is it that giveth efficacy to all the spiritual operations.' *Bishop Andrewes*

Trinity arose 'implicitly to do justice to the cross of Christ'.  
The divinity of Jesus *requires* the Trinity, and *vice versa*.

### Father and Son

The Father sends the Son in the ultimate act of selfless love.  
Logos-Jesus is with God at the beginning as the Word through whom all things were made.  
The Son acts by the Spirit laid upon him.

The Father also sends the Spirit after the Resurrection, 'another comforter'. Despite all that has been written before and since the Great Schism, John tells us that the Son, too, sends the Holy Spirit.

### Spirit

Genesis.  
Psalms,  
inspirer of prophets and as an agent of change.

Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah and Simeon  
The Spirit leads Jesus into the desert and strengthens him to outwit Satan.  
He returns to Galilee full of the power of the spirit.

He promises that the Father will send the Advocate, and when it appears in Acts 2, it does so with 'such an explosion of new life that the Church's mission thereafter has the appearance of a new type of mission or mission in a new way.'

Pentecost as part of Incarnation  
Cornelius: the most unlikely people can be agents of mission: it is not for churchy Christians to judge who may be members of their select clubs.

In all these narratives the emphasis is on the Holy Spirit as catalyst, guide, and inspirer, risk taker. The Spirit empowers and emboldens all that let it, and, like a certain famous lager, refreshes the parts other agents can't reach.

All we have to do is listen to and cooperate with the Spirit.

Like Our Lord, we may need to retire to solitude in order to discern the radio signal among all the interference. This contemplative act is itself a vital part of mission. It 'strengthens for service'. In the monastic communities, which grew in part from the desert dwellers, it provides opportunity for critical contemplation, something that Henri Nouwen rightly emphasizes is essential to point out 'the illusory mask of the manipulative world' by showing things for what they are. Society may consider such a

contemplative 'a fool, a madman, a danger to society and a threat to mankind', but such prophecy is part of the violence, power and energy of mission necessary to clear the decks (cleansing the Temple again). It enables signs of hope and new growth, as from the mustard seed.

Nicodemus  
Born again of spirit  
I have been saved  
I am being saved  
I will be saved  
Not a once-and-for-all thing

I don't feel saved at the moment  
I live in hope

Wind/breath  
Spirit moves where it will  
Take risks

Look at the churches  
How many take risks  
How many exist just in order to preserve tradition, and only for the sake of tradition  
What would happen if the spirit moved this congregation, me, you.

### **Trinitarian economy and doctrine: community**

love, sharing, community, self-forgetfulness, beauty, hope, fun, peace and joy.  
All this could be subsumed into the phrase *delight amongst equals*.

Mission is not about inflicting our views on others. The Trinity is a community of equals, remember!

Community  
Williams  
belong and not belong  
count and not count  
balance  
trinitarian sharing, balance

wisdom is love, light and knowledge  
trinitarian sharing, balance

### **Trinity in the wider community: inter-faith dialogue**

- Hindu
- Buddhism
- Islam
  - **Asma al-Husna:** All-Compassionate; All-Merciful; Pure One; Source of Peace; Inspirer of Faith; Guardian; Greatest; Creator; Maker of Order; Shaper of Beauty; Forgiving; Patient One; Abaser; Judge; Avenger; Resurrector.

### **The numinous Trinity**

- I have heard senior clergy say they can't preach on the Trinity. They should be ashamed of themselves.
- The trinitarian richness and inclusivity of liturgy brought me in and held me,
- Beauty. Not doggerel hymns and playschool prayers
- 'Christianity is, at heart, a mystery religion, but the mystery is too often forgotten or denied: our liturgies are written in the language of a civil service memo, and seekers ... are often met with superficial responses or an embarrassed silence.' Our Lord was a Jew who, as far as we know, was loyal to the worship of the Temple in all its richness and splendour. He did not reject his traditions. The virtue of having an adequate sense of the traditions to which you belong and which confront you is not, says Alasdair MacIntyre, 'conservative antiquarianism', which is exactly how it is portrayed by some Christians, but something that 'manifests itself in a grasp of those future possibilities which the past has made available to the present.'
- Cathedral congregations, Orthodox church
- the *mystery itself* is part of its attraction.
- In all its complexity it has something to offer seekers who want to be challenged and stimulated.
- John Polkinghorne systems, both particle and cosmic, that depend on balance, community, sharing, and mutuality.

Brokenness

Life is messy

We break the bread, break the body of Christ,

Eucharist is taking this brokenness and making something beautiful out of it.