

Trinity Sunday 2013

God's Love Poured into our Hearts

There's no other religion I know of that has a doctrine at all like our doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Hinduism has many gods and goddesses as images of the Divine – not three but hundreds; Buddhism has the enlightened ones, the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, but no personal God; Judaism and Islam are firmly monotheistic, with prophets who are clearly human not divine. So Christianity stands alone with its rather complicated theology of one God in three Persons – still monotheistic, but with these three faces of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit, in a way, who makes the Trinity possible. The Spirit is this dynamic, creative energy that flows out of the Creator and into creation – like Wisdom, in the reading today from Proverbs. You can think of the Holy Spirit as the evolutionary life force that has been creating the universe since the Big Bang more than 13 billion years ago, and is still producing life in its endless variety today.

You can also think of the Holy Spirit within us, as Jesus taught, helping us personally evolve and develop, through the Spirit's gifts of wisdom, truth and guidance. The Holy Spirit has been called the Go-Between God, connecting creation with the Creator, and connecting us with a personal, loving God. The Spirit also connects us with Jesus – not just with the memory of the historical man who lived and died, rose and ascended 2000 years ago, but also with the eternal Christ, the Word who existed “in the beginning” and continues to live in our hearts today.

I picture the Holy Trinity as a sort of Celtic knot, with the Holy Spirit being the flow of love and connection between God the Creator, Jesus the Son, and us and all creation. So, as a friend of mine says, it's actually a Quaternity, not just a Trinity: the Creator, Son, Spirit and us, all held together in an inter-weaving relationship of love.

What does the Trinity mean to you?

In my experience we instinctively tend to feel closer to one face of God than another at different times. When you're out in nature, or watching a sunset, or you're holding your newborn grandchild, it's easy to just want to praise God the Creator. And you should! It's a great habit to get into, thanking and praising God when something wonderful takes your breath away or fills your heart with peace and joy.

But at other times it might be Jesus, God's Son, who feels closer – especially during those times when life is a struggle and you need the friendship of Jesus, who promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world. Many people find enormous comfort in picturing Jesus walking with them, or sitting beside them, or even weeping with them, when the road is hard and painful.

In all cases, it's the Holy Spirit who is making that connection for us, lifting our hearts and our praises and prayers to God. St Paul says it's the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and praying within us (see Romans 8) – that piece of God planted in each and every one of us. Without the Holy Spirit we would have no sense of connection to God or to Jesus – we might believe God exists, or we might read about Jesus, but there couldn't be a living, evolving relationship.

In today's epistle Paul says that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us", and that we have peace with God through "this grace in which we stand." I picture kids in a hot, dry country when it's the beginning of the rainy season, and they run outside as soon as they smell and see and hear the rains start, and they just stand under the rain as it pours down onto them, soaking them completely and bringing life back to the earth.

That's what God's grace is like: it's pouring down onto us all the time, showering us with love and acceptance and forgiveness and healing and peace. And the Holy Spirit is that rain. Or maybe you can think of the Holy Spirit as the tap! Either way, it's the Spirit that enables us to receive grace, and grow in our faith, and gradually become more like Jesus.

This Trinity Sunday, ponder how you relate to this mysterious three-person God we worship. Who do you feel closer to? Who do you tend to pray to? And can you see yourself invited into that relationship of love, woven together by the Holy Spirit?

We stand in grace.

God's love is poured into our hearts.

And in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity we have a myriad of ways of knowing this gracious, life-changing God.

May you feel that grace today, in the name of the Father-Mother-Creator, and of the Son, our Saviour, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.