

Trinity Sunday talk year C

God is always going to be part mystery to us, this side of glory anyway, and, I think it is only God in us, that understands the things of God.

One of those mysteries is that God is one, yet he is also the trinity – 3. It is difficult to get our head round, and so most of us concentrate on one part of God: Father, Son or Holy Spirit.

However, in their book, *The Divine Dance*, Richard Rohr and Mike Morrell say this: *'mystery isn't something that you cannot understand – it is something that you can **endlessly understand!*** in other words, as you keep chewing it over, you keep finding other aspects of God.

In our search to understand and find God, we search for similes, analogies and metaphors to help us understand better who he is. We can say he is like...this or is similar to...that, but we can never describe fully, because we are talking about realms beyond ours, realms of transcendence and mystery.

It was the very mystical Cappadocian Fathers in the 4th century in Turkey, who eventually developed some highly sophisticated thinking on what we soon called the Trinity. It took 3 centuries of reflection on the gospels to have the courage to say it. Someone called Mevlana Rumi of Konya afterward came up with, what I think is a great metaphor: whatever is going on in **God 'is a flow, a radical relatedness, a perfect communion between three – a circle dance of love.'**

And of course, God is the dance itself.

Most of you know by now because I talk about it often, I love the icon painting of Abraham's hospitality. You'll remember perhaps the story in Genesis about the Lord appearing to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre. Abraham looked up and saw 3 men standing nearby. But Abraham sees something other than men, and invites them to stay and eat. They do, and before they leave, they tell him that Sarah will have a son.

Many people have speculated, pondered and chewed this story over, the painting is considered a picture of the Trinity. Richard Rohr talks about the power of God being in the gaps between them; the flowing of the love they share, is where the power is. I think that is as close to the truth that we will get.

The icon is the holy one – God, in the form of three – eating and drinking at a table, in infinite hospitality and utter love and enjoyment between themselves, it helps us to see that in the beginning was **the relationship**, and, it has always been. As we look at the icon, it's as if God is drawing us into that relationship, and, as you gaze into the picture, you find that there is room at the table for you.

An invitation we all need to respond too.

I don't think we can separate Father, Son and Spirit because after Jesus took on flesh and became like us and died and rose again, he ascended back into heaven, where I believe God is once again one. But our minds can't fathom that, and so we tend to latch onto either Father, Son or Spirit. The bible encourages this way of thinking, Jesus says when we pray we should say our Father, we are told to pray in the name of Jesus, and St Paul talks about the Holy Spirit praying through us, if we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, then it all kind of makes sense.

But a reminder again, God is beyond our words or thinking, so these ways of looking at God are there as metaphors, ways of explaining the unexplainable.

This heavenly relationship of God is really important for us to try and grasp some understanding of, because it helps us to understand a little better what God is calling us into.

Richard Rohr puts what many of us think into these words: ***'the greatest dis-ease facing humanity right now is our profound and painful sense of disconnection.'***

'Disconnection with God, certainly, but also from ourselves (our bodies), from each other and from our world. Our sense of this fourfold isolation is plunging us as a culture – as a species – into increasingly destructive behaviour.'

But when we make connections, we find enjoyment, companionship, love and a zest for life, all these come about when we have relationship; with God and one another.

A quote from the book *The Divine Dance*: *'This triune God allows you, implores you, to live easily with God everywhere and all the time: in the budding of a plant, the smile of a gardener, the excitement of a teenage boy over his new girlfriend, the tireless determination of a research scientist, the pride of a mechanic over the hidden work under the hood, the loving nuzzle of horses, the tenderness with which eagles feed their chicks, and the downward flow of every mountain stream.'*

This God is even found in suffering and death of those very things! How could this not be the life-energy of God? How can it be anything else? Such a big definition of life must include death in its great Embrace. Paul tells in 1 Corinthians 15 when talking about death; (that) death has lost its sting, and "none of your labours will be wasted." vs58

This loving relationship of the Trinity is one we need to emulate, but we can't do that if we can't or don't first love our self. **'if love, isn't flowing out of you, it's probably because you're not allowing it to flow towards you.** Love can flow towards us in any and every moment, if we allow it. It can come in the image or scent of a flower, in a grain of sand, in a cloud, and in any person whom you allow to delight you. It's why you find yourself beginning to smile at things for no apparent reason. >>>

I want to talk for a minute or so about using our body in prayer: do we sit or stand, put our hands together, or hold them out? Often, I am caught unawares when I pray, emotion takes over and I find myself weeping for whatever I am praying for. Sometimes when I feel I am in a battle for myself or someone else, I find myself stomping... and sometimes, when I'm on my own, I dance before the Lord in praise and thanksgiving.

Another form of body prayer is to make the sign of the cross on our body. Some of you do that and I wonder if you have ever thought why exactly? Some are suspicious of it, some ancient ritual that Roman Catholics taught... Well I am going to give you Richard Rohr's excellent reasons for doing it.

First of all, the ritual says that we know something of God in our body – and our body needs to be reminded in whose 'name' it lives and moves and has its being. Some call this kinesthetic knowing or even muscle memory.

So, the movement: we start with the head, in the name of the Father. Then we pull our hand down to the belly, down across our heart and chest...and of the Son encompasses creation – the physical, the seemingly lower material world. And then we cross this line with the entire world of variety and difference from shoulder to shoulder, with the Holy Spirit.

The meaning of this embodied gesture is actually quite clear and precise. I now exist under and within a new name – not my own name, but my trinitarian identity. I am marked and signed.

We stand inside this wholeness. It really is a marvellous piece of body prayer – says Richard Rohr. He says if you are not from the tradition that uses this, try it. If you are used to doing it in a mindless and perfunctory way, try and breathe through each step. Rohr says that trinitarian theology has great power to move you out of the head and into the flow, and that, he says, is a better experience in our bodies and hearts.

I said earlier that it is the flow, the relationship between the trinity is where we find the love and power to live in him. All we have to do to enter into this flow, is to walk and breathe and receive and give, as we stand and sit and lie down inside this wholeness of God. As Luke says in Act 17: ²⁸ ***'For in him we live and move and have our being.'***

Richard Rohr encourage us to live the rest of our lives allowing this flow of life, to mark and bless our body consciously and slowly – with what is already happening within us. In the name of the Father + and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Finally, I want to leave you with this prayer that I found helpful:

God for us, we call you Father.

God alongside us, we call you Jesus.

God within us, we call you Holy Spirit.

You are the eternal mystery that enables, enfolds, and enlivens all things.

Even us and even me.

Every name falls short of your goodness and greatness.

We can only see who you are in what is.

We ask for such perfect seeing –

As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall ever be. Amen.