

## Trinity Sunday 30 May 2021 St Thomas

“...how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?”  
(John 3:12b)

I heard about a priest who was appointed to a church dedicated to the Holy Trinity. He said he was delighted on two counts. Firstly that the patronal festival was always going to fall on a Sunday – after all Trinity Sunday is a Sunday by definition. But secondly because it is traditional to invite a visiting speaker for the Patronal Festival and that meant that he’d never have to preach on the Trinity. I suspect that today may be one of the least popular Sundays of the churches year for ministers, pastors and priests to be asked to preach on. Trinity Sunday where we celebrate the triune nature of God is not easy. I have in the past been reduced to referring to it as “higher mathematics Sunday.” Three in one and one in three, and before we know it our minds are tied up in knots. But don’t get too worried. I am not about to start trying to unravel the mysteries of this great truth in any detail. As I will be explaining, our faith must stand up to academic rigour and we cannot suspend reason and logic, but neither are we required to have any particular IQ to know Jesus as Lord. We don’t need to pass an exam to know God in our lives and enjoy a relationship with the triune Godhead who is the creator of all things in times and space.

However, I don’t want to disappoint those of you who were looking forward to seeing the vicar squirm and try to explain the trinity. I’m well aware of the hounds of orthodoxy getting ready to hunt me down if I fall into the trap of modalism etc. So I will take you back to the early church and a single word. The word is perichoresis and as you can probably guess its Greek. περιχώρησις (perikhōrēsis, “going round, rotation”), from περιχωρέω (perikhōréō), from περί (perí, “around”) + χωρέω (khōréō, “go forward, travel”), because the relationship between the three members of the Trinity was described by early Christians as an eternal interpenetrating circulation. Except χωρέω (khōréō) is the same root as our word choreography and the word περιχώρησις is usually associated with an eternal dance. The idea is that it’s the dance we are describing. It requires

three figures, each with their own identity, but they are as one and without any one of them, the perichoretic dance cannot (indeed does not) exist. Father son and holy spirit are one in the triune Godhead. The dance ONLY exists because there are three persons dancing together. With one or two the dance doesn’t exist.

However, interesting this might be on an intellectual level, as I’ve already said, you don’t need to be intellectual to know God and Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen and the spirit working in the world and you and me.

And it’s about faith and belief that I want us to think about for the next few moments this morning. It’s not often that I turn to St Thomas Aquinas for inspiration, but on this occasion I’m going to. When Thomas was writing his Summa Theologica in the 13 century, it’s claimed that he very nearly didn’t include what’s become one of the most famous bits. Summa is perhaps most famous for its five arguments for the existence of God, which are known as the “five ways” (Latin: quinque viae). The really interesting thing to me is that for Thomas Aquinas and the society he lived in, belief in God was mostly a given. Everyone believed. For Thomas the leap of faith was believing in the Trinity.

We live in different times. It’s become acceptable to not believe in God. The creator triune God we worship is ignored by many and to mention the trinity appears to risk us being labelled religious loonies or cranks. It’s bad enough admitting to belief in God and Jesus, but admitting you believe in Father Son and Holy Spirit seems a step too far.

Yet not speaking up for God is an act of denial. This perichoretic dance is in all of us and it’s compelling us to join in and ask others to join in too. If we celebrated the birth of the church at Pentecost, this week, we are compelled to speak up to grow the church.

And just remember a couple of things. Conspiracy theories abound. You’ll all be aware how a high-flying jet’s engines leaving a condensation trail (contrail) There’s a conspiracy theory that contrails are part of a Secret

Large-scale Atmospheric Program, this theory alleges that water condensation trails ("contrails") from aircraft consist of chemical or biological agents, or contain a supposedly toxic mix of aluminum, strontium and barium,[10] under secret government policies. An estimated 17% of people globally believe the theory to be true or partly true.

And you're worried about speaking out for the truth of the divine God head, Jesus Christ and him crucified, now sitting at the right hand of God with the spirit working in the world?

Or there's a theory about New Coca cola. The theory claims that The Coca-Cola Company intentionally changed to an inferior formula with New Coke, with the intent either of driving up demand for the original product or permitting the reintroduction of the original with a new formula using cheaper ingredients. Coca-Cola president Donald Keough rebutted this charge: "The truth is, we're not that dumb, and we're not that smart." Yet millions of people believed this story.

And we're worried about standing up for what we know is true?  
I know it's a bit corny to end sermons with a poem but Malcom Guite's sonnet on the Trinity sums it all up rather well.

In the Beginning, not in time or space,  
But in the quick before both space and time,  
In Life, in Love, in co-inherent Grace,  
In three in one and one in three, in rhyme,  
In music, in the whole creation story,  
In His own image, His imagination,  
The Triune Poet makes us for His glory,  
And makes us each the other's inspiration.  
He calls us out of darkness, chaos, chance,  
To improvise a music of our own,  
To sing the chord that calls us to the dance,  
Three notes resounding from a single tone,  
To sing the End in whom we all begin;  
Our God beyond, beside us and within.