

Q. What's the definition of a deliriously happy vicar?
A. Someone who is on holiday and does not have to preach on Trinity Sunday.

Q. Why?
A. It is universally agreed that it is the most difficult sermon to prepare

Thank you Jon.

Trinity Sunday celebrates a doctrine, not an event such as the last two Sundays celebrating Christ's Ascension and Pentecost. It is a difficult doctrine to understand, indeed, many Christians admit they don't understand it, whilst others probably including me, think they understand it but actually don't.

It is not logical or arithmetical i.e. $1+1+1=1$

God is a mystery; we can not fully understand fully and describe the Trinity with our limited vocabulary which is why we should always stand in awe of God. Anyhow, a mystery wouldn't be a mystery if we knew all the answers.

One way of trying to understand the Trinity is through combining words and images. When the scaffolding was in place Jon took a **photo of the top of our West window**. It is written in Latin but translates as follows:
Diagram of Trinity

It shows:

- There is exactly one God
- That God is Father
- That God is Son
- That God is Holy Spirit
- In other words there are three really distinct Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- But at the same time each of the Persons is God

And equally important it shows that the Trinity is not:

- Three individuals who together make one God
- Three Gods joined together
- Three different properties of one God

HTS image

As such the doctrine of the Trinity emphasizes that God is very different from humankind but at the same time reflects how Christians encounter God in different ways or you can equally put it the other way and say the Trinity encounter humanity in different ways as:

- God the Father as Creator
- God the Son who lived amongst humankind
- God the Holy Spirit who filled humankind with new life and power

The word Trinity is not mentioned or referred to in the Bible; it is actually a fourth century attempt of explaining the mystery that is God but there are many instances where it is reasonable to deduce the Trinity is being referenced.

The phrase 'there is but one God' is used frequently throughout the Old Testament, yet the Hebrew word for God is '**Elohim**' yet 'Elohim' is a Hebrew plural noun and my research suggests that its particular use in parts of Genesis and Isaiah means more than two. Whilst this is not an explicit argument for the Trinity, it does denote the plurality in God.

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Pure speculation on my part...but can you remember when The Lord appears to Abraham in Genesis 18? Abraham is sitting at the entrance of his tent, looks up and sees three men. All three stay and eat a meal. Now I had always assumed that Abraham had been visited by God the Father accompanied by two angels – but it does not actually say that, it just says “he looked up and saw THREE men standing near him”. Father, Son and Holy Ghost? Equally probable.

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There are over 20 instances in the New Testament where all three persons of the Trinity can be identified in the same narrative, perhaps the most obvious two from 2 Corinthians 13, which are the words of the Grace which we shall say at the end of this service and at Jesus' baptism which was our Gospel reading today.

BUT above all the Trinity establishes the imperative that God is love and we, being made in the image of God, should at all times and in all ways love through relationship with God, with each other AND with ourselves.

And that leads me nicely into our Gospel narrative.

Mark wastes no time at all in establishing that Jesus is the “Christ” and the “Son of God” (verse 1) and asserts that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of ‘the voice’ in Isaiah's prophecy and by doing so clearly equates Jesus with God the Father. This also roots Jesus firmly into the historic, ancient context of Israel's religion – i.e. it is not a new thing. John in his prologue takes the matter even further back to Jesus being present at Creation.

Mark then introduces the third of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit pictured as a Dove. We have grown up associating the Holy Spirit and the dove as being one and the same but to the Jews of the day this would have been very striking – my research suggests the only previous reference to the Holy Spirit being a dove is in the story of Creation in the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

And the dove/Holy Spirit is again present at the Baptism. God the Father covers Christ with words of his love and the Spirit covers him with power. That is how I imagine the relationship of the trinity had always been. It suggests that God is not static but an active God and Theologian Cornelius Plantinga says “the persons within God exalt each other, and defer to one another.....in constant movement glorifying and overflowing with regards for each other”

To glorify or adore another means to unconditionally worship and serve them. And you do so not because you get something out of it but because your love and appreciation of them is a response to what they truly are. God is love and we are made in His image to unconditionally worship and serve him.

One person is an individual; two people make a couple but it takes at least three people to make a community. And that is what ultimately I see as the Trinity – a community of persons in relation to one another; each an individual but constantly in relationship to each other. They have different identities they are not one and the same. That is relationship. Relationship is the pattern set by the Trinity.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are pouring love and joy and adoration into and through each other in. That is what makes the Trinity so utterly different to anything else we might imagine. There is an utter lack of any self-centredness; just a mutual self giving love expressed freely and without restraint.

And this is the crux of my faith as far as I'm concerned – If this world in which we live was made by the Triune God I have described, then relationships of love are what life is really all about. To live out Christ's first commandment to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and with all our strength”.

Our challenge is to live out freely and as fully as possible in loving relationships with our families, our friends and let's not forget Christ second commandment : “to love our neighbour as ourselves”

In Christ's own words "There is no other commandment greater than these".

Today and every Sunday we are able to offer up our worship and praise to God, through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit; each week John blesses us in the name of the Trinity as he makes the sign of the cross over us. When we say the creed we acknowledge the Trinity and last week little Eva's baptism was carried out in the name of the Trinity.

There is no getting away from the fact that this church is called Holy Trinity Sunningdale and for me that says it all...whatever we do as individuals or as a church, we should always remember that relationships of love are what life is all about. The relationship of love model in and by the Trinity.

That is the challenge we must face up to and meet head on but the closing words of this service which we will say together expresses exactly why we can be confident of living out Christ's commandments:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. That is what the Trinity embodies - the freely offered, freely available model to relationally living in the image of God.

Amen