

### Trinity Sunday: CC 11<sup>th</sup> June (John 16:12-15, Romans 5.1-5)

The names we are given are important. Many of you know me as Fr Samuel– even though before coming here not even my own Mother would call me Samuel– so I am still getting used to the fact that when I’m called Samuel, I’m not necessarily in trouble...

The language of the Trinity describes God as three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet in perfect unity, one God. It is the doctrine the early church reached for to speak of the indescribable God, who nonetheless makes himself graspable.

On the one hand, this language by its very nature speaks of the mystery and unknowability of God. We cannot really fathom how God can be three persons, yet One. We may try a series of analogies; Ice, water, steam all being the same substance H<sub>2</sub>O, or Neapolitan ice cream, different flavours in one scoop... yet, none of these quite capture it.

Though on the other hand, whilst a mystery and unknowable, speaking of God as Trinity or Triune, gives us certain contours for understanding who God is. Crucially, it is the language of a relational God, who welcome us.

The Nicene Creed that we’ll say after this, is actually a very good place to start; and helps determine what we can say about each person of the Trinity.

The Father; Creator of Heaven and earth– God almighty, God all-powerful. Ineffable and indescribable.

Yet, in God’s “beyond–ness” as the Father, in Jesus Christ, we are also led to speak of God the Son. God who, for our sakes, came down from heaven in the person of Jesus– a human being, yet still God. In Jesus Christ, God the Son was crucified, dead and buried. Yet, rose from the dead and ascends to be with the Father in heaven. A promise of the new creation not defeated by death, but carried into everlasting life with God.

And as we celebrated at Pentecost last week, we know God is also Holy Spirit. That as the Son ascends to the Father, we are not left alone. Because by the Holy Spirit, God dwells in us and among us in the church. Again, this Holy Spirit is still God, proceeding from the Father and the Son, worthy of worship and glory. God’s Spirit giving life in the church and drawing us into this dynamic, unified, relational heart of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

As Jesus lays out in John’s Gospel, the Spirit guides the church into the truth of God’s life and love, because the Spirit shares in the glory that is Christ’s. But this glory that is Christ’s, does not exclusively belong to him either, but belongs to him because all that the Father has is *also* his.

In the Trinity, therefore, we have this picture of mutual and infinite movement of self-giving and other-receiving. Not so that each person *dissolves* into another, but whereby each person cannot be fully known, conceived, or described without the other. A unity-in-difference. To speak of the Father, is to speak of the Son and the Spirit. To speak of the Son is to speak of the Father and the Spirit. To speak of the Spirit is to speak of the Son and the Father.

Practically, this is an important point for how we pray. We do not have to divide up our prayers equally, so that no “part” of the Trinity feels left out... Rather, as we say, in the power of the Spirit, and in union with Christ, we pray to the Father.

This is the power of the Lord’s prayer. It is the Lord’s prayer, because it is the prayer Jesus taught us. Though in some ways it is also the *Lord’s* prayer in that only Jesus can truly pray “Our Father.” Yet the miracle is that through Jesus, we are invited to stand where he stands, in this relationship with the Father, and standing here we discover ourselves by carried by the Spirit praying to God as Our Father too!

This is what Paul echoes in Romans; through Jesus Christ we have peace with God because he invites us to stand where he stands, as a son and daughter of God. And so, we may boast in this hope of sharing in God’s glory. Indeed, even when we suffer, says Paul, we know that we still have this hope, because we are not alone and have God’s Spirit with us, who continually pours God’s love into our hearts.

In the Rublev icon on the front of your pew sheets and the image above the altar behind me, we are reminded of this invitation offered by God as Holy Trinity. An invitation into relationship. The three angels, each representing a person of the Trinity, mutually acknowledging one another so that if you follow the eyesight of each, you are continually drawn to another person, in a never ceasing movement.

Yet we also notice that there is an empty space at the table, inviting us in, to join this mutual loving relationship. Just as in Holy Communion, in receiving Christ’s offering of himself and giving ourselves to God, however limited it may feel, we open ourselves up to be swept into God’s triune life. To *commune* with God.

To speak of God as Trinity, is to speak of the God who invites us into relationship with Him.

You might have wondered why some people cross themselves when the name of God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is spoken. There may well be several reasons for this, but the most helpful I’ve heard, is that it represents the Father in heaven, coming down to earth in the Son, and that the Holy Spirit dwells among us. Of course, this also makes the sign of the *cross*, which reveals for us the heart of God. Three persons of God, unified in this one symbol.

In this simple gesture, we affirm that the unknowable God, makes himself known as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And who reveals the heart of God to be *cross-shaped*; that is, a heart poured out *for us*; you might even say *ruptured for us*, so that space is made in the heart of God for us to enter.

This is the name God has given us– to show us who he is. The relational God who welcomes us in. The name of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.