

## Trinity

22 5 16

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you have given us your servants grace  
by the confession of a true faith,  
to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity,  
and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity:  
keep us steadfast in this faith,  
that we may evermore be defended from all adversities;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
one God, now and for ever.

Our text may be found in today's reading from the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans and is a combination of part of verse 1 and part of verse 5:

'. . . we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .  
because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit . . .'

It's Trinity Sunday today and again, today, the task impossible: to explain in logic the Trinity. Intellectually, one needs to be a superman so to do.

Actually, do you remember 'Superman' in the old days of black and white television – American import, late 50s, early 60s: mild-mannered reporter, Clark

Kent, Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen, his colleagues, and the way this unlikely, bespectacled reporter became the superhero of his generation in cloak and costume that showed off his muscular body to great advantage.

Well, recently I was given a copy of 'Man of Steel', one of the more recent reworkings of the comic book legend and I was impressed by the special effects and how the impossible was made possible in film. 'Superman' is a great story of good fighting evil and coming out on top in the end. But, as I looked at the destruction of many of the New York skyscrapers in an alien attack, there was little sign of actual human destruction – blood and guts and mangled bodies – it was more like a child's computer game than Armageddon.

Well, 'Superman' is from the realm of fiction whereas the Trinity is theological fact – our unique Christian insight into the God we worship. So how can we best understand the problem posed by our understanding that God is at one and the same time not only One but Three ? That the God we worship is Three in One and One in Three ? That God is not only simply God but that He is They – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit ?

Okay that's the problem so what's the answer ? Well, in logic there isn't one; there can't be one ! But that doesn't mean to say we can't have a working understanding of the paradox. Put simply, we simply accept that when we talk about God as we understand him, we can at one and the same time say two different truths about him. First, we think of him as a unity – one God. Then, we

think of him as trinity – three persons. It’s pragmatic. It’s practical. But it ducks the question of how to explain the logically impossible.

Okay, so perhaps I can’t resolve the paradox in logic but I did come across a word in Greek that got my attention and it really excited me because it gave me an insight into how trinity could also be unity. The word περιχώρησις (perichoresis) describes the love that flows between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The love is the force, the bond, the electricity that unites them, allowing them at one and the same time to be separate and undivided – if you like of one heart and mind though all three of them each have one.

St Bernard of Clairvaux presents us with another image of the same – the trinity of a kiss – the one who kisses, the one who is kissed and the kiss itself. Three in one and I love it. Just as those who marry are two and also come together as one, so too may God whom we worship and adore be a mystery in which we are comfortable believing.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew’s, Dinard*

*22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016*

G: Sermons 34 : Trinity

