

Proverbs 8.1-4,22-31; Ps. 8; Romans 5.1-5; John16.12; -15

---

We like to understand things, don't we? In our oft misplaced confidence, we will invariably dismiss something that is beyond our capacity to understand. In other words, if we can't get our head around something, it is likely to be nonsense.

Not everything lends itself to rational explanation, especially in the world of what I call Godtalk, my pet name for theology. Along with other prominent mysteries in our faith, virgin birth, resurrection, not to mention creation itself, the Trinity looms large.

If the common opening of trinitarian teaching is measured against the rule of logic, it probably makes little sense. St Anselm said that theology is faith seeking understanding. Sometimes, I wonder if even the best theology might confuse our faith, so I shall try today to go backwards into the theology from our faith experience of God.

But first a revision lesson. Four years ago, I stood in this place at an all-age service on Trinity Sunday and dared to suggest that I would try to explain the central mystery of the Trinity in three minutes. I wonder if anyone of the young people who were here that day remember my illustration. And by young people, I mean anyone under the age of 99.

I suggested that the Trinity is like a potato, a large one, from which we make a pile of mash, some fries and a few chips. Now mash is not fries, fries are not chips, nor are chips mash. But they are all....

So we have potato the mash, potato the fries and potato the chips. We experience potato, the common substance, in three forms, essentially the same, but different in character, in texture and in flavour. But they are all one, in substance.

Now God is rather similar. We like to have simple images, understandings of God that can satisfy our small minds. As I said, we try to trim complex things into bite-size pieces so that we can digest them. And if we do that with God, I think we underestimate the hugeness and the complexity of God, way beyond our understanding. But God is all things, is in all things and the Trinity reflects this.

There is God the Creator, the mastermind, reflected in the extent of creative order from the finest and most wondrous detail to the timeless expanse of universe and beyond. There is God the Redeemer, ever-present from the beginning, a cosmic Christ who took on flesh for the briefest and most transformative stay on earth, showing us how to be human and how God is in terms we might almost understand. And God the Giver of Life, whose gift and constant presence we celebrated last week. All three, bound into one by their common substance, three characters, three *personnages* together large enough to paint the cosmos, always and everywhere.

But the Trinity is much deeper than her scale and power. She is deeply personal and intimate, not too grand and aloof in some heaven light years away. Proximate, loving, indwelling for every one of us, and it is an intimacy into which we are not only invited but drawn by Its magnetism and warmth.

I hope you have received a copy of the famous Rublev icon as you came into church. Take it away with you and pay over it, put it somewhere prominent where you pray, work or do the dishes. There are countless explanations of what Rublev had in mind and on his heart when it was painted, and some of them may even reflect his intentions.

But let me describe how it speaks to me, not original by any means, but we can only share our understanding of God through our experience of God. Trinity is often discarded by some. There are those whose love of God centres only on Jesus or largely around the work of the Spirit. Much as I love both, neither, on their own, is sufficient for me. But Trinity offers God in so many dimensions, as I have said. Our creeds are inherently and powerfully trinitarian and I emphatically claim my threefold God as the fullest expression of Divine being and complete love.

Here, Rublev paints a picture of God in relationship, with Godself. There is a need, not just that humankind should not live alone, but neither should God. Relationship and interdependence are the stuff of life. We exist in relationship because in relationship we find meaning, we find a way to love and the nourishment of being loved.

And I don't mean the one-to-one relationship we understand, but that too. We live in relationship with people we don't know, but for whom we weep, as does God. We live in relationship with the planet and the worlds beyond, with life in eternity from which we come and to which we shall return.

And here is that pattern. But there is someone missing. At the empty place before us, we can join that relationship. There is a beckoning. We belong there to complete the circle. Come on in, say the three sitting there, with one voice. We want you with us. We need you to make us whole.

Let me confess that I have no friends. Well, I am lucky to have lots of people who love me, support and encourage me and plenty who just put up with me, but I recall when Facebook first emerged. People would ask 'How many friends do you have?' Well, I was never a fan, it just wasn't for me, but I worried about this redefinition of friendship. It lacked body, someone with warmth, someone to embrace and talk with. Friendship, relationship is much more than an algorithm.

Humankind has never worked perfectly in relationship. Wars and hostility, needy people abandoned by the wayside, betrayal and exploitation. Psychologist Jonathan Shay works in the field of moral injury, a sense of despair arising from deep hurt, wrong done not just to ourselves but to others in a way that harms our deepest moral sensibilities. And the trouble is that this happens constantly in relationship, personal, national, global, economic and so on.

Because the relationship that enables humankind to prosper is of a certain kind. Those three figures sitting invitingly in Rublev's icon offer relationship that is self-giving and unconditional. It is something to learn, to emulate. That's why I love to live with and within the Trinity.

The last Trinity Sunday I shared with you was just two years ago, streamed live on BlueJeans from our home in Australia, our blessed ironing board dressed up

like an altar. It was a delight to be with you, and better than nothing but we had to come back when the need arose, the opportunity came. We all in churches across the world need to find our way back into relationship and into community. Let us with due caution and an abundance of eagerness, find our way back as we gather around God's table.