**TRINITY SUNDAY 2019 Year C**

Once there was an elderly man, and one evening he was taking his usual walk. He was enjoying the crisp night air and the wind was blowing gently. But suddenly he heard a voice crying out, 'Help me! Help me!' The man looked around and saw no one and so he continued his walk. Again he heard a tiny voice, 'Help me, help me!' This time he looked down and he saw a small frog. He gently lifted up the frog and looked at it intently. The frog spoke, 'I am really a very beautiful princess. If you will kiss me, I will turn back into a princess and I will hug you and kiss you and love you forever.' The man thought for a moment, placed the frog in his top pocket, and continued walking. The little frog looked up out of the pocket and asked, 'Why don't you kiss me?' The man looked down and said, 'Frankly, at this stage of my life, I'd rather have a talking frog.'

What is the point of this story? It is that we all exist in relationship to others. The nature and style of those relationships are vital components that determine just what might be achieved and what value they have. In seeking to comprehend our Trinitarian Faith, perhaps the most meaningful aspect we can approach is that of relationship. Our very existence is defined by who we are in relation to others, even if it's to a frog. When we apply this to our relationship to God, we reach into the very heart of our being.

If Judaism can be considered to have a creed, it is the Shema – *Shema Yisrael, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai echad* – *‘Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’* This precious statement of faith has been uttered within liturgies and at moments of joy and of crisis throughout Judaism’s long history. The Shema was often on the lips of those perishing in the gas chambers of the extermination camps of the 2nd World War. It is also at the heart of Jesus’ identity, not just as a Jew, but as part of the mystery of the Trinity.

As a statement, it talks of the unfathomable mystery of the ‘oneness’ of God. Jesus, in summarising the commandments in Matthew’s Gospel, collapses them to two ‘loves’. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might, and, you shall love your neighbour as yourself.* In fact, even the phrase he uses describing *how* we should love God is taken by him directly from the next phrase of the Shema as it appears in Deuteronomy *(6: 4-15).* In doing so, Jesus points to the relational heart of the Shema. And from this flows some understanding of the mystery of the Christian Trinitarian life. It would be all too easy to think of the Trinity as ‘two blokes and a bird,’ when, in fact, Jesus points through every aspect of his journey to the greater understanding of relational love at the heart of our Faith. Images are useful, but we should always remember that they are just our own representations and are very much about time and place. Even our terminology in calling the concept of the Trinity as ‘three persons in one God’ can’t begin to approach the mystery. In fact, they cloud the divine energy of Love which lies at the heart of our Faith.

The New Testament contains several wonderful insights of how Jesus himself might be approached – something which follows on from last week’s Gospel passage, when he said, *‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.’* These astonishing words point to our understanding that within him are revealed the genes of Divine Love within our humanity. St Paul refers to Jesus as *‘the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.’*(*Colossian 1: 15).* The Letter to the Hebrews says that *‘The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.’* *(Hebrews 1: 3)* For John, Jesus is *‘The Word made flesh’ (John 1: 14)* – the personification of the Wisdom of God within our human journey.

Our first reading also talks of Wisdom - ‘Lady Wisdom’ as represented within the Hebrew scriptures – the intimacy of indwelling within creation and within our very hearts, the divine impulse which leads us to love – the Holy Spirit, the comforter, fire, and grace at work in so many areas of our lives.

The question of our being drawn to the intimacy of this knowledge of God’s Love at work within our lives, is utterly dependent on our own call to relationship, our growing awareness of allowing the abiding presence of God to work within at every moment of every day. The intimacy and overflowing grace of relationship within the Trinity then calls us to seek to reveal this within our own journeys.

In this age, when the voices of ‘self’ shout ever louder, we, as people of a Trinitarian faith are called to talk about relationship – about the intimacy of those who follow Jesus share in their unity with other Christians as parts of the Body of Christ. We are then called to reveal the knowledge of the human trajectory and ultimate destination of unity within the heart of God’s Love. These gifts we are called to spend our lives sharing – the greatest gifts we can ever share – gifts open to all people.

As I said, the imagery within our mind’s eye of the Trinity is a useful tool, but should never cloud the inner-knowledge that God is Love, revealed in the wonders of a Creation which reaches beyond our understanding, yet made known to us within every aspect of our humanity by Jesus, and that through the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit we are called not just to know this love, but seek to conform ourselves ever closer to the mystery that we are enfolded in so great a love.

The eloquent and ancient Collect for this Sunday describes our call to the confession of a true faith as we acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity. They are great words, although perhaps our call to remember and reveal the inextinguishable Love at the heart of everything - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - is even more powerfully expressed in the words Jesus himself will have recited every day of his adult life:

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem upon your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.*

Amen.



**Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22-31**

8 Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?
2On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;
3beside the gates in front of the town,
    at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
4‘To you, O people, I call,
    and my cry is to all that live.

22The Lord created me at the beginning[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+8&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-16625b)] of his work,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+8&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-16625c)]
    the first of his acts of long ago.
23Ages ago I was set up,
    at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
24When there were no depths I was brought forth,
    when there were no springs abounding with water.
25Before the mountains had been shaped,
    before the hills, I was brought forth—
26when he had not yet made earth and fields,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+8&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-16629d)]
    or the world’s first bits of soil.
27When he established the heavens, I was there,
    when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
28when he made firm the skies above,
    when he established the fountains of the deep,
29when he assigned to the sea its limit,
    so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
30    then I was beside him, like a master worker;[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+8&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-16633e)]
and I was daily his[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+8&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-16633f)] delight,
    rejoicing before him always,
31rejoicing in his inhabited world
    and delighting in the human race.

**Romans 5: 1-5**

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-28034a)] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom we have obtained access[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-28035b)] to this grace in which we stand; and we[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-28035c)] boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3And not only that, but we[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-28036d)] also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

**John 16: 12-15**

12‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.