**May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**So, today is Trinity Sunday, when we are supposed to grapple with how God can be three persons and yet only one God.**

There is a youtube clip available, which always pops up around this time of year, called St Patrick’s Bad Analogies. If you are interested in the theology of the Trinity – both what it is and what it isn’t - do look it up. Trinity Sunday is the one most feared by most preachers, because the Holy Trinity is the thing which, if you try to explain it, you most risk committing heresy. I touched on the subject at school this week, and the children all seemed pretty chilled about it. So if you want to discuss the Trinity in detail, please ask a child from St Peter’s School. 😊

Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, we sing often on Trinity Sunday. Three holys. And almighty. Power can be a dangerous thing. We can be seduced by it, tempted to show off our position, our authority and influence, even just the force of our personality. We are rightly cautious of great displays of power: think the militaristic displays put on by Korea and others.

Even as individuals, we find ourselves concerned most of all for maintaining our power and influence over those areas we can control. But at the heart of God is not power or control, but love – the love that exists between Father, Son and Spirit. The power and majesty of God is certainly revealed to us, but central to that majesty is love.

People tell me from time to time that the God of the Old Testament is a vindictive and jealous God; a God who is angry and sits in judgement. But as Isaiah discovers, God is not remote, but involved; a source of both blessing and peace. That is overwhelmingly the image of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, which we find in Scripture. Isaiah narrates: Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” The God of the Old Testament is absolutely the same God as the God of the New Testament; the God revealed in Jesus.

Nicodemus, in the gospel reading today, is a dark character, who come to Jesus at night, we are told. He is a Pharisee, who pops up on three separate occasions in John’s gospel. And everything is dark **for** him too – he is completely unable to see God’s kingdom, let alone enter it. And darkness shrouds the mystery of the Trinity for most of us. But the fact that we don’t get it is no bar to us – note that Jesus didn’t reject Nicodemus because he was spiritually blind, so to speak – far from it: he invited him to join that Divine Dance, the eternal life of Father, Son and Spirit. I quote Jesus’ words to Nicodemus: For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

And then again, I was exploring the Bible with the confirmation candidates a couple of weeks ago, and we were looking at the very beginning of John’s gospel: in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word WAS God…..and so on. And someone was struck by that sense of the beginning of the world, the story from Genesis. Quite rightly. Right at the beginning, even before Time, God was. And so was the Word, Jesus. And if you go to Genesis, so also was the Spirit, moving over the face of the waters. So God always was three persons.

But people, in their human inadequacy, were so little able to ‘know’ God, that the Son, Jesus, was incarnate (born as a human) to be the salvation of humankind – to make it possible to know God because we can recognise in him, in Jesus, the Love that was ungraspable until that point.

For God to be Good, God only needs to be One; for God to be Love, though, God needs to be two, (there’s something absolutely fundamental to the Christian faith about relationship, and relationship always implies more than one), but for God to be Joy and Happiness – so says a bishop of my acquaintance - God needs to be three. It is this community of love and joy which desires our company and wants us to join them. We can be included in a group of three the way we aren’t included in a pair. Read the Bible: we never have a sense of Jesus on his own. And particularly as we attend to Jesus as he appears in John’s gospel, we are aware that Jesus is with both Father and Spirit; that experience of who Jesus is as God, is already Trinity.

Herbert McCabe, a Dominican priest and theologian, who died in 2001, put it like this: imagine you are a child going into the kitchen and there are three adults sitting round the table killing themselves laughing and really enjoying themselves. You don’t know what’s going on but you do know for certain that you want to grow up and be part of that group and join them at the table and share what they are sharing.

Those of you who are familiar with the famous icon of Rublev entitled The Three Visitors, will picture this: the table is set around, but only three places are filled. At the front of the table, framed by the knees of the figures at the left and right of the picture, is a blank rectangle. Some commentators believe that this was once a mirror. So there was room at the table for a fourth person, and who would you see, looking at this, but yourself. We are positively encouraged to see ourselves at the table: expected, welcomed and wanted.

The Glorious Trinity: God the Father, o**ur origin; Jesus Christ, Son of God, our salvation; the Holy Spirit, our eternal home.**

Some clever-clogs once asked: **So what was God doing before the world was created then?** And some clever-clogs answered: **He was enjoying themselves.** *(Think about it..)* **Amen**