

Homily for people and parishes...

Bishop Cam Venables – Sunday 15th June 2025, Trinity Sunday

Readings: **Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31**
Romans 5:1-5

Psalm 8
John 16:12-15

For many Churches around the world this Sunday has the focus of understanding God to be Trinity. The God who has three distinct identities that are so deeply in relationship with one another they can be considered one. The New Testament language of 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' is often expressed in the liturgies of the American Episcopal Church as the God who is 'Loving, Liberating, and Life-Giving' and in this naming there is a focus on function rather than person. 'Though I really like this phrasing it still falls short of adequately describing the fullness of God.

This should not surprise us because language is finite, and we believe that God is infinite... at the same time before all things, within all things, and beyond all things! So, it's important to remember that God is bigger than our words, our Doctrines and our understanding, and that if we think we have a complete understanding of God we may find ourselves aligned with the Sadducees and Pharisees of the Gospels. They believed that they had a perfect understanding of who God was and what God wanted, and when Jesus contradicted them, they didn't like it!

When Jesus taught the crowds that God's love was more generous than his religion suggested, they didn't like it! And, when Jesus spent time with people who were regarded as utterly unworthy of God's love because of who they were, or what they did, the Pharisees and Sadducees didn't like it!

Having said this, I wonder what words you would use to describe God to someone who was not a person of faith, and was genuinely curious? It could be a family member or a friend at a Bar-B-Que; it could be a colleague at work, or a friend at school... how would you describe God to them, if they asked?

I think there is a great gift in understanding God as Trinity: three equal persons who are in such deep relationship that they can be considered one. If we accept the understanding that we are each made in God's image – found in the first of the two Genesis creation stories - and that God is a community of three persons, then we might accept that there is something deep within us that is intended to be in relationship with others.

We may think that the language of two becoming one is limited to the relationships shared between two people in marriage, or between lovers, but I think our human experience tells us we can also find this deep connectedness in other relationships. A sense of harmony and deep relationship can exist between siblings, between a parent and child, and between

friends. Somehow, that person – or those people – just ‘get us’ and we ‘get them’. They intuitively know when we’re troubled, and when we’re content... and we have similar intuitions about them. In such relationships there is mutually life-giving symbiosis, and synergies that make possible more than two individuals operating singly.

I have experienced something of this when improvising music with some people over the years. Somehow, they have intuited where I would go with a vocal harmony, or a chord progression – and, I have done the same with them. When watching my son play senior basketball years ago it was a joy to watch when he blind passed a ball back to a team-mate, and time and again they were intuitively in the right place to receive it.

Clearly, we can experience a deep sense of connectedness with other people, and perhaps in this we get some insight into the deep unity and love we believe to be intrinsic to the nature of God.

The week’s Old Testament reading from Proverbs suggests that as well as loving, liberating and life-giving God is also wise. Proverbs suggests that somehow wisdom is also intrinsic to the nature of God, but the imagery is not of an old sage stroking his beard! The reading instead begins with a question and then opens into invitation and affirmation. It reads, *“Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live...”*

When the New Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit we read about a sound like wind, tongues of fire, and a dove. We are given the language of ‘advocate’ and ‘comforter’, and speak about Spiritual gifts, and the fruit of the Spirit that grow in the character of all who follow Christ. But, we don’t hear about the Old Testament understanding of God’s Spirit as wisdom. Yet, the Proverbs reading affirms that Wisdom, like Christ, was with God, and in God, right from the beginning, and the last two verses are particularly evocative in this. They read: *“... then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”* (Proverbs 8:30-31).

The Spirit and Wisdom of God *‘rejoicing in his world, and delighting in the human race’* is an inspiring image that led American Biblical scholar, Jeff Paschal, to express the Proverbs reading in a thought-provoking way. I’d like close by sharing his helpful image of God as Wisdom, present with us in the midst of everyday life. He writes:

“I was out shopping yesterday, and whom did I run into? Wisdom. Yeah, there she was. She called me over and we began talking, Wisdom and I. Then, I went down to the courthouse, and there she was again, making a plea for justice in some dingy courtroom where somebody had been unjustly accused. After that, I dropped by the

school, and she'd gotten there before me, calling for students and teachers alike to always seek the truth.

Then I went for a walk in the woods, moving along the trail in quiet meditation. Wisdom snuck up on me and said, 'Now that we're alone, I have something I want to share with you, a present I want you to enjoy. You know, I have been around a long time, really before the beginning of time. I have been whirling and dancing with God all along. I am God's delight, laughing and playing...

I want you to know the lightness of spirit and gladness that comes when you welcome me. Will you set aside those thoughts, words, and deeds that make life heavy and sad for you and for others? Will you come and laugh, and play with me? Will you come and dance with me? Will you?"

Will we?

Let's pray...

God beyond naming, we give thanks for life and love; and ask for an openness to your wisdom, and for the courage to follow where you lead. We pray in the name of the One who helps us understand that your grace, your amazing grace, is greater than our imagining. **Amen**