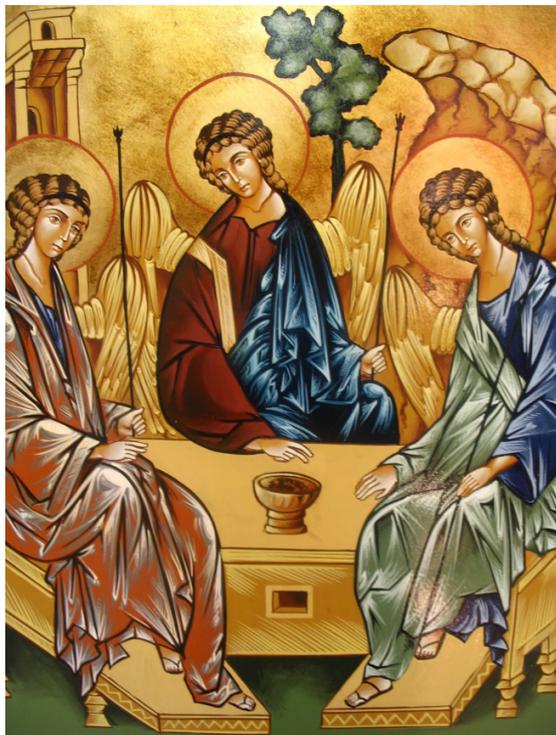


Trinity Sunday



Today is Trinity Sunday. After the flair and colour of Pentecost, and before, so called 'ordinary time' or the Sundays after Pentecost, we come to a time of reflection and space for contemplation of the triune nature of God and the different ways God's infinite love is expressed to humanity. We consider God in Three persons, the Trinity. One God, understood in different ways: traditionally as Father, Son and Holy Spirit..two blokes and a chick! But more profound than that, an understanding that relationship is at the heart of God.

Some have described the Trinity in terms of perichoresis, which literally means to dance or flow around, mutual movement, mutual indwelling. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration into them. Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/perichoresis.html#ixzz33oApKWDo>

The Rev. Canon C. K. Robertson, Ph.D reflects:

'There is nothing that separates the mystical dance of perichoresis, but it can be imagined as a Venn diagram showing three groups or circles intersecting in the centre with each circle intersecting the others perfectly and multidimensionally, as they rotate or "dance" about a common centre of divine love. The very essence of God is relationship, community, unconditional love.

It is even more remarkable then that God, who in this Dance needs no other, did choose to create you, me, each and every individual we encounter, and the whole world of creation--so that we might join in this Dance. The invitations have been sent. There are to be no mere spectators on the dance floor. No outcasts, no outsiders. We are called by God to see ourselves as God sees each of us and thus discover ourselves to be, like the Persons of the Trinity, truly beloved

I heard a discussion on Radio National on Tuesday night as I was travelling between meetings. The person interviewed had done some research on happiness, and discovered that we are most happy not when we buy things for ourselves, but when we give things away, either to family and friends, or to people overseas, and that we are happier purchasing and having experiences than stuff.. Being in relationship with others.. is what brings happiness.. God knows that!

The icon which defines the very essence of Trinity is invariably the one which shows the Trinity in the form of three angels, by 13th century Russian iconographer, Andrei Rublev 1360 - 1430 entitled, "The Trinity".

A few words about icons first. An icon is not a painting in the sense we normally regard pieces of art, although it is an image that is painted. An icon is a window out of the obvious realities of everyday life into the realm of God. Every paint-stroke has a meaning hallowed by centuries of prayer. Icons are religious images that hover between two worlds, putting into colours and shapes what cannot be grasped by the intellect. Rendering the invisible visible. Icons are the visual equivalents of the Divine Scriptures. Not every religious painting can be considered an icon. Icons are religious pictures that convey the inner spiritual meaning of their subject matter. The Son of God came to restore the divine image in human form. Iconography is the graphic witness to this restoration.

This icon of the Trinity takes as its subject the mysterious story where Abraham receives three visitors as he camps by the oak of Mamre. He serves them a meal. As the conversation progresses he seems to be talking straight to God, as if these 'angels' were in some way a metaphor for the three persons of the Trinity. In Rublev's representation of the scene, the three gold-winged figures are seated around a table on which a golden, chalice-like bowl contains a roasted lamb. In the background of the picture, a house can be seen at the top left and a tree in the centre. Less distinctly, a rocky hill lies in the upper right corner. The composition is a great circle around the table,

focusing the attention on the chalice-bowl at the centre, which reminds the viewer inescapably of an altar at Communion.

On one level this picture shows three angels seated under Abraham's tree, but on another it is a visual expression of what the Trinity means, what is the nature of God, and how we approach God. Reading the picture from left to right, we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Rublev gives each person of the Trinity different clothing. On the right, the Holy Spirit has a garment of the clear blue of the sky, wrapped over with a robe of a fragile green. So the Spirit of creation moves in sky and water, breathes in heaven and earth. All living things owe their freshness to the Spirit's touch.

The Son has the deepest colors; a thick heavy garment of the reddish-brown of earth and a cloak of the blue of heaven. In his person he unites heaven and earth, the two natures are present in him, and over his right shoulder (the Government shall be upon his shoulder) there is a band of gold shot through the earthly garment, as his divinity suffuses and transfigures his earthly being.

The Father seems to wear all the colours in a kind of fabric that changes with the light, that seems transparent, that cannot be described or confined in words. And this is how it should be. No one has seen the Father, but the vision of him fills the universe.

The wings of the angels or persons are gold. Their seats are gold. The chalice in the centre is gold, and the roof of the house. Whether they sit, whether they fly, all is perfect, precious, and worthy. In stasis, when there is no activity apparent on the part of God, God's way is golden.

The Father looks forward, raising his hand in blessing to the Son. It is impossible to tell whether he looks up at the Son or down to the chalice on the table, but his gesture expresses a movement towards the Son. This is my Son, listen to him... The hand of the Son points on, around the circle, to the Spirit. In this simple array we see the movement of life towards us, The Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit. The life flows clockwise around the circle. And we complete the circle. As the Father sends the Son, as the Son sends the Holy Spirit, so we are invited and sent to complete the circle of the Godhead with our response. And we respond to the movement of the Spirit who points us to Jesus. And he shows us the Father in whom all things come to fruition. This is the counter-clockwise movement of our lives,

in response to the movement of God. And along the way are the three signs at the top of the picture, the hill, the tree, and the house.

The Spirit touches us, even though we may not know who it is that is touching us. The Spirit leads us by ways we may not be aware of, up the hill of prayer. It may be steep and rocky, but the journeying God goes before us along the path. It leads to Jesus, the Son of God, and it leads to a tree. A great tree in the heat of the day spreads its shade. It is a place of security, a place of peace, a place where we begin to find out the possibilities of who we can be. It is no ordinary tree. It stands above the Son in the picture, and stands above the altar-table where the lamb lies within the chalice. Because of the sacrifice this tree grows. The tree of death has been transformed into a tree of life for us.

The tree is on the way to the house. Over the head of the Father is the house of the Father. It is the goal of our journey. It is the beginning and end of our lives. Its roof is golden. Its door is always open for the traveler. It has a tower, and its window is always open so that the Father can incessantly scan the roads for a glimpse of a returning prodigal.

Each person holds a staff, which is so long it, cuts the picture into sections. Why should beings with wings, that can fly like the light, have need of a staff for their journey? Because we are on a journey and these three persons enter into our journey, our slow movement across the face of the earth. Their feet are tired from traveling. God is with us in the weariness of our human road. The traveler God sits down at our ordinary tables and spreads them with a hint of heaven

The table or altar lies at the centre of the picture. It is at once the place of Abraham's hospitality to the angels, and God's place of hospitality to us. That ambiguity lies at the heart of communion, at the heart of worship. As soon as we open a sacred place for God to enter, for God to be welcomed, it becomes God's place. It is we who are welcomed, it is we who must 'take off our shoes' because of the holiness of the ground.

Contained in the centre of the circle, a sign of death. The lamb, killed. The holy meal brought to the table. All points to this space, this mystery: within it, everything about God is summed up and expressed, God's glory, and above all God's love. And it is expressed in such a way that we can reach it. For the space at this table is on our side. We are invited to join the group at the table and receive the heart of their being for ourselves.

We are invited to complete the circle, to join the dance, to complete the movements of God in the world by our own response. Below the altar a rectangle marks the holy place where the relics of the martyrs were kept in a church. It lies before us. It invites us to come into the depth and intimacy of all that is represented here. Come follow the Spirit up the hill of prayer. Come, live in the shadow of the Son of God, rest yourself beneath his tree of life. Come, journey to the home, prepared for you in the house of your Father.

The table is spread, the door is open. Come.

<http://www.sacredheartpullman.org/lcon%20explanation.htm>

Remember the Gospel account of the baptism of Jesus, the heavenly words to Jesus--"You are my beloved, with you I am well pleased"-- in our own baptism in Christ, these words are meant for us as well: "You are my beloved, with you I am well pleased." Not a bad thing to remember. In the baptismal service in The Book of Common Prayer, similar words are spoken over the newly baptised individual: "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever." Again, not a bad thing to remember. The prophet Isaiah said it beautifully: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." It is no anonymous form letter that invites us to participate in the Divine Dance. Each one of us is invited...by name.

On this Trinity Sunday, God gives us a priceless gift that we can share with all those we meet, all those whose life's baggage has become so full, so heavy, that they have forgotten who they are and whose they are. We can dare to look them in the eye and quietly remind them that they are not God and don't need to be. There is one God, who is relationship, who is Divine Dance, who is Love. And they are God's Beloved.'

http://day1.org/1947-the_dance

2 Corinthians 13:11f Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Susanna Pain
15 June 2014