

TRINITY SUNDAY – MAY 30, 2021

A priest recently said that he found that going to church on Trinity Sunday was a treat because there are always great hymns. But unfortunately he said the hymns are accompanied by weary clergy trying to fit the mystery of the Trinity into about 8 minutes. Trying to explain the unexplainable. They use diagrams and flow charts and get into convoluted explanations.

I could pass out one of those diagrams that we've seen before – the ones with the circle and the triangle that try to label what is and what is not, what was or was not or what will be or not be. Or we could have Celtic symbols of three branches or circles or intertwining vines. Can we find three pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that fit neatly together to make a whole or pieces that seem to come from three different puzzles? We have all seen and heard all those props and I don't think it brings us any closer to explaining the Trinity.

The concept of the Trinity came about originally in the fourth century as an attempt to explain the triune God to the laity. The Nicene Creed is our most familiar experience of that explanation. It has survived through centuries and its longevity is in itself extraordinary when the life span of so many things is fleeting and subject to the whims of the ages.

Does the Trinity need words to explain it? Maybe yes and maybe no. The Trinity is slippery. Just when you think you've "got it" – the light bulb moment – it shifts and slips away again. Are they three or are they one – and how can one be three and three be one. You can try to arrange them and put them in order and whoops it all falls apart.

There have been attempts to arrange the elements in chronological order – first God, then Jesus followed by the Holy Spirit. For me that falls apart in the beginning of Genesis when we are told that a spirit swept over the earth at the beginning of creation. And that is not the only reference to the spirit in the Old Testament. Jesus' references to God are not in the past tense as if God came before and ceased to exist when Jesus arrived. So does one part of the Trinity follow the other in neat order? I think not.

Think about your beliefs. What you were taught and what have been your experiences? How were the elements explained to you? Do they mesh and overlap? For me they are not separate but part of a whole.

But most of all consider your life and how the Trinity lives in it. I have felt all three in my life together and separately – in answers to prayer, in help in need, in comfort in times of trouble, in beauty – the list is endless. I don't need an intellectual exercise. Instead I can depend on experience and belief.

I keep coming back to Jesus' words to Thomas. "Do not doubt but believe...Have you believed because you have seen...Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe".