

Trinity Sunday

A sermon preached at the parish church of St Andrew Guernsey on Trinity Sunday, 7 June 2020, and prepared to support the online service by the Rector, the Very Reverend Tim Barker

Readings: Isaiah 40 vv 12-17 and 27-end; 2 Corinthians 13 vv 11-end and Matthew 28 vv 16-20

In recent weeks, strong and stable leadership has been at a premium. It has been a wise decision by Guernsey's leaders to have the same core team presenting the message to the people of Guernsey at the regular press conferences, now reduced to the single weekly event on a Friday lunchtime. We understand that if there's a text message reminding us of the meeting, there will be significant news. Week by week, the triumvirate (I am avoiding the word 'trinity' to describe them) of Nicola Brink, Heidi Soulsby and Gavin St Pier have told us, frankly and clearly, what we need to know. They have been joined by others, but they are the core team.

How different this is to the more mixed messages in other jurisdictions.

Today is Trinity Sunday. And if we are looking for words to describe the wonder and mystery at the heart of this day, and the mystery of God we celebrate, we should look no further than this. Everything is held together in the Holy Trinity – the Godhead, in our one God whom we know and experience as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Trinity Sunday is a celebration of completion, a day when we can just sit or stand, lost in the wonder of God, a day when all the loose ends are tied up.

Trinity Sunday may be the Cinderella of the church's year. Christmas, Easter and Pentecost are the three great festivals, with their emphasis on the incarnation, on the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Christmas and Easter are celebrated with presents and cards, special food and bank holidays.

Then comes Trinity Sunday. A day largely overlooked, even within the life of the church. Even in this year when our liturgical observance has been disturbed, this day is the culmination of the months since Advent. On Trinity Sunday, we bring together all the different facets of the last six months. And we are launched into rest of the year until the cycle begins again in Advent. *This is the day when we stand in awe, when we glimpse, and celebrate, God.*

Over the past months, we have focused, Sunday by Sunday, on many of the different themes from the Bible that demand our attention. We are invited to spend time on the details, and to understand what God is saying to us through these different stories and pictures and events. But at the same time we need to see the big picture: to be reminded, as we are on Trinity Sunday, that the past months of looking at the details have not taken us through a series of unconnected events, but lead us into growing understanding of God the Father, the Creator, whom we meet in the Old Testament; of the life of Jesus; and both the coming of the Holy Spirit and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and of individual Christians.

These three great dimensions of religious experience are no more than three views of the same, the one, reality. Within the Trinity, there is strength and stability, which allow us to have confidence and which shapes all that we are and all that we do. As God's love overflows out of the life of the Trinity, demonstrating overwhelming love and generosity, so we are given confidence to allow God's love to flow in and through us.

Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity is widely reproduced. You will find it in on this week's newsletter. At one level it is a depiction of the hospitality that Abraham offers to visitors who turn out to be not casual passers-by but angels, messengers of God, bringing profound and life changing news to Abraham, that even in his old age he will be the father of many nations. But it is also read as a description of the Holy Trinity. It celebrates both the hospitality of Abraham and the generous and loving relationship that exists at the heart of God – which we are called to incarnate, make real, in the life of the Church, so that we can take it out into our hurting and needy world. Our generous response to God's generosity is our proclamation of hope.

Hear the words in the prophecy of Isaiah, the end of today's Old Testament reading: 'those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.' We are challenged to live out that confidence in God's love and generosity in how we live our lives, relate to others and use our talents and our money – generously and confidently, so that all can flourish in the strength and stability of God's embrace.

When we make a response of faith to God as we see him in Jesus, then we enter into God's life of love and relationship because we are filled with the Holy Spirit. God himself takes a part in our lives, and we are drawn into the mystery and wonder and reality of the Holy Trinity. *And we are complete.* We can be the people that God calls us to be.