

Reflection

How important is the idea of the Trinity to you? Is the concept that our God is a Triune God something you think about often, sometimes, or only on Trinity Sunday? The Trinitarian God is unique to Christianity, something that sets us apart from other religions. And I would like to suggest that the doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental to how we Christians understand God's nature.

I have had the experience of a non-Christian, a Muslim lady, asking me: Do you worship one God? Or 3? Telling her that we worship one God in three persons didn't really make it any clearer to her. So, even if we don't think about the Trinitarian nature of God all that often, I guess we should have something simple and sensible that we can say to someone curious about the Trinity.

We have heard the lectionary readings for Trinity Sunday. I wonder if you see immediately how they can be used to explain the doctrine of the Trinity? Wouldn't you think that the ones who compiled the lectionary (learned theologians from every major denomination) might have chosen better passages, that explain clearly and concisely about the Trinity?

But there really aren't better passages. Tay has mentioned different instances where the Trinitarian nature of God is alluded to, but the word 'Trinity' does not appear in the Bible, and indeed the doctrine of the Trinity was not clearly articulated by the church until the 4th century after Christ. As Tay has explained, the doctrine of the Trinity is complex.

So how to explain the Trinity to someone who is not of the faith? I will share with you what I told the lady who was asking me about whether God is one or three? This is what I think the Trinity is all about.

For me the most important thing about the doctrine of the Trinity this: from the very beginning, before anything was created, God already existed as 3 persons. God existed not as a solitary figure that we are prone to imagining, sitting on a throne in splendour, but as a community of 3 persons united in fellowship, peace, harmony, co-operation, and mutual love. The Trinity as a concept may not be easily understood, but it expresses the deepest truth about God: that God is first and foremost a co-operating, loving and creative *community*. The very first community that existed.

What does this mean for us as Christians? It seems to me that, as followers of the Trinitarian God, we also are meant to live in community with one another, mirroring the community the Trinity. As with the

community of the Trinity, our relationships should be characterised by reciprocity, harmony, co-operation, mutuality and love.

I have heard some Christians say that theirs is a private faith. They pray and read the Bible by themselves and watch Songs of Praise every Sunday. They say that they have no need to belong to a church, they have no need for a community of faith. I wonder what has happened that they have given up trying to find a church where they can belong? I feel sad for these people, because in their isolation, that they lack the opportunity to experience the joys and challenges of being in community. They also miss out on being able to reflect the nature of our Trinitarian God.

It was Aristotle who first said: 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.' This is true for the Trinity. The Trinity as a whole is more than Father, plus Son plus Holy Spirit. Together, they are God in Community, God in loving relationship. The same can also be said for our church community. Together, we are more than the sum of us as individuals. Together, we are the community of faith in this place, caring for one another, and serving and witnessing together.

The church is, first and foremost, a community. This is what we Christians can offer the world. You may have heard it said that loneliness is the greatest scourge of modern life. Loneliness, and a sense of alienation. As the church, we can do something about this. We can reach out to others in love, welcome them, embrace them and invite them to join our community.

Look at the faces around you. As a community, we reflect the deepest truth about the nature of our Trinitarian God. We are community, just as God is community. Amen