

Reflection for Trinity Sunday by Rev'd Canon Michael Last

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

We refer to this verse as “The Grace” but it is the final benediction of St Paul’s 2nd letter to the Corinthians. Although not directly a presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity, it does show us very clearly the relationship between the three persons of the Godhead; how close, intertwined, and inseparable they are.

Paul prays that the grace, the undeserved gift of God that comes through Christ Jesus be deepened in the hearts and lives of Corinthian Christians, that they may more fully live out the Christian life. This grace, seen in the life of Jesus, behind which also lies the love of God: a love that will not let go regardless of the way humanity turns its back on God. A grace that is made tangible by the fellowship, the presence of the Holy Spirit; God’s presence in the hearts of the believer. Grace that emanates from one God - Father Son and Holy Spirit, each part-integral, each part united in purpose, each part only functioning in relation to the others.

It sounds difficult to understand and it is; yet it lies at the heart of the church's understanding of who God is. Begin to understand the Trinity, and you begin not only to understand God but also to see how the church is called to be and to function.

Let us reflect on each part of the Godhead in turn.

Firstly, God the Father, the maker of heaven and earth.

Back in 1969 the crew of Apollo 11 became the first people to look down at Earth from outer space. Buzz Aldrin called it *"a brilliant jewel in the black velvet sky."* Looking down on the earth from space touched them in a life-changing way - the beauty and order laid out before them.

A mere accident? No! rather a creator's hand behind it – God’s.

I am sure each of us has felt something similar - where we feel especially close to God. For some, it may be the top of a mountain – a beautiful yet lonely place. While for others it’s looking at the wonders of the flowers in their garden - miniature perfection. Creation, manifesting God as the creator and the sustainer – God the Father.

God the Son – Jesus, the historical figure who lived, walked, taught, and died for our salvation and who is now alive and reigns in heaven. The one who was both truly and fully human, just as we are - knowing pain, suffering, joy, and laughter, yet at the same time also truly God, truly divine. It is not easy to hold in tension both those parts of Christ’s nature.

God the Holy Spirit, the helper, the life-giver, the presence of God with us today; working through God’s people to extend the kingdom of God.

Maybe we are tempted to see them as three separate persons, and, almost inevitably, to relate more closely to one particular part of the Trinity. But to make such a separation or to elevate one part of the Trinity above another distorts the very nature of God.

On Trinity Sunday we are reminded that God is one God in three persons or modes, united in every way. It is the complete unity of love, purpose and creativity that lies at the heart of God and is reflected today.

Understanding the nature of God in this way – as being one in creativity, love, and purpose – the Trinitarian community of God, provides the Christian community with a strong model. But it is not just the church but also the whole of human society that needs to be united not divided, working together for the good of all. You may have the most talented and gifted group of individuals but, unless they are united in purpose they will never fulfill their full potential.

How often it is said - “divide and conquer”. It is when divisions begin to emerge in groups or relations that they are at great risk. It is then that wedges can be driven into those cracks - wedges that break apart what appears to be strong.

It is exactly this which the doctrine of the Trinity reveals to us: that God is a community of persons in a relationship of self-giving love: unity of love, that allows the impossible to happen and things to be turned upside down.

As we look at the image of God on Trinity Sunday what we need to ask is: do our relationships reflect what we see in God?

Jesus said “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Paul prayed for the Corinthians saying The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

May we be people and church that reflect the Trinitarian nature of God in unity of love and purpose.