

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
4th June 2023 - The Most Holy Trinity

Readings (Year A): 1st: Exodus 34:4-6,8-9. 2nd: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13. **Gospel:** John 3:16-18.

Our celebration today calls us to contemplate the very essence of who God really is. By the power of our own intelligence, we might well be able to recognise a creator behind the universe, a supreme being who is the cause of everything that exists. We might even have a sense of wonder at the beauty of creation, and awareness of the spiritual qualities that underpin life. But there is more to God than this.

The Liturgical year from Advent to last Sunday has led us through the events of Jesus, and it is in the person of Jesus that we come to a fuller understanding of who God is.

It is Jesus who reveals God to us as a heavenly Father, his Father and our Father.

It is Jesus who shows himself to be the Son of that Father and ourselves as his sisters and brothers.

It is Jesus who promises to send the Holy Spirit as a gift from his Father and himself so that they might make their home within us.

In word and action, Jesus teaches us the truth about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, something we could never fully grasp by reasoning alone.

When he spoke with Nicodemus, Jesus didn't use the language of philosophy to explain why he had been sent by the Father; he used the language of love. 'God so loved that he gave.'

It is the loving Father who sends his beloved Son so that the way to eternal life might be opened up for all.

The Father and the Son exist in a relationship of love and the bond of love that binds them together is the Holy Spirit.

The God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness, revealed to Moses is now shown completely as the God who is a community of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit existing as one in a relationship of perfect love. We certainly do need an intellectual understanding of what we believe and, in this images and examples can help us.

Earlier Church Fathers used the image of the sun to speak of the Trinity, with the sun representing the Father, the light representing the Son and the heat the Holy Spirit.

St Patrick famously used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the unity of God in three persons.

Any preacher is wary on this day of straying into heresy, by either getting caught up in trying to explain either a mathematical conundrum or a complex theological mystery.

An ancient hymn speaks of 'Most ancient of all mysteries.' The mystery of the Trinity is not a problem that needs to be solved. We cannot explain the mystery, not because it is unknowable or difficult. Rather, this mystery is one that we know in our bones because it has been marked upon us from the beginning of our life of faith.

Not for nothing did Cardinal Hume leave us many books, among them:

The Mystery of the Incarnation: The Mystery of the Cross: The Mystery of Love.

St Augustine said "If you think you can fathom it –It's not God."

It is an experience of faith which we are called to encounter.

St Patrick every day used to bind unto himself the strong name of the Trinity. The God who surrounds us, the Christ who is with us and the Spirit within us. "Most ancient of all mysteries before thy throne we lie; Have mercy now, most merciful, most Holy Trinity."

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