

# Homily for people and parishes...

Bishop Cam Venables – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022, Trinity Sunday

Readings: **Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31**

**Psalm 8**

Romans 5:1-5

**John 16:12-15**

For Churches around the world who use the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary, this Sunday has the focus of understanding God as Trinity. The God who has three distinct identities so deeply in relationship with one another that they are one. The New Testament language of 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' is often expressed in the liturgies of the American Episcopal Church as the God who is 'Loving, Liberating, and Life-Giving', and 'though I really like this phrasing it still falls short of adequately describing the fullness of God.

This is not a surprise because language is finite, and we believe that God is before all things and beyond all things! So, it's important to remember that God is so much bigger than our words, our Doctrines and understandings, and that if we think we have a complete understanding of God we might be uncomfortably aligning ourselves with the Sadducees and Pharisees described in the Gospels. For they believed that they had a perfect understanding of who God was, and what God wanted, and when Jesus contradicted them, they didn't like it!

When Jesus taught the crowds that God's love was much more generous than his religion suggested, they didn't like it! And, when Jesus spent time with people who were regarded as utterly unworthy of God's love because of who they were, or what they did, the Sadducees and Pharisees really didn't like it!

Bearing these things in mind, I wonder what words you would use to describe God, or the nature of God, to someone who was not a person of faith and was genuinely curious?

I think there is a great gift in understanding God as three equal persons who are in such deep relationship that they can be considered one. For, if we accept the understanding that we are each made in God's image – found in the first of the two creation stories of Genesis - and that God is a community of three persons, then we might accept that there is something deep within us that is intended to be in deep relationship with others.

We may think that the language of two becoming one is limited to the relationship shared between two people in marriage, but I think our human experience suggests we can also find this deep connectedness in other relationships. A sense of harmony and deep relationship can exist between siblings, between a parent and a child, and between friends. Somehow, that person – or those people – just 'get us'. They intuitively know when we're troubled, and when we're content.

I have experienced something of this in improvising music with some people. Somehow, they have intuited where I would go with a vocal harmony, or a chord progression – or, I have done the same with them. When watching my son play basketball some years ago I witnessed moments when he blind passed a ball back to a team mate, and they were intuitively in the right place to receive it.

Clearly, we can experience a deep sense of connectedness with other people in many ways, and maybe in this we get glimpses about the deep unity and love that we believe is intrinsic to the nature of God.

The week's Old Testament reading from Proverbs suggests that wisdom is also intrinsic to the nature of God, but the imagery is not of an old Patriarch stroking his beard. The reading begins with a question, and then opens into invitation and affirmation. It reads, *"Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live..."*

When the New Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit we get the imagery of a sound like wind, tongues of fire, and a dove. We read the language of advocate and comforter, and speak about the gifts that the Spirit gives, and the fruit of the Spirit that grows in the character of those who follow Christ. But, we don't hear much about the Old Testament understanding of God's Spirit as wisdom. The Proverbs reading affirms that Wisdom was with God, and in God, right from the beginning, and the last two verses are particularly evocative: *"... then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race."* (Proverbs 8:30-31).

The Spirit and Wisdom of God *'rejoicing in his world, and delighting in the human race'* is an inspiring image that led American Biblical scholar, Jeff Paschal, to express the Proverbs reading in a thought provoking way. I'd like to share this helpful image of God as Wisdom, present with us in the midst of everyday life:

*"I was out shopping yesterday, and whom did I run into? Wisdom. Yeah, there she was. She called me over and we began talking, Wisdom and I. Then, I went down to the courthouse, and there she was again, making a plea for justice in some dingy courtroom where somebody had been unjustly accused. After that, I dropped by the school, and she'd gotten there before me, calling for students and teachers alike to always seek the truth.*

*Then I went for a walk in the woods, moving along the trail in quiet meditation. Wisdom snuck up on me and said, 'Now that we're alone, I have something I want to share with you, a present I want you to enjoy. You know, I have been around a long*

*time, really before the beginning of time. I have been whirling and dancing with God all along. I am God's delight, laughing and playing.*

*I want you to know the lightness of spirit and gladness that comes when you welcome me. Will you set aside those thoughts, words, and deeds that make life heavy and sad for you and for others? Will you come and laugh, and play with me? Will you come and dance with me? Will you?"*

Let's pray...

God beyond naming, we give thanks for life and love; and pray for an openness to your wisdom, and the courage to follow where you lead. We pray in the name of the One who helped us understand that your grace is so often beyond our imagining. Amen