



Art by Anna Slade. She made this picture with paper and glue, copying the image from Perichoresis NGO.

John 3 1-17 and Romans 8.12-17 – Trinity Sunday – LET’S DANCE

I wonder what music gets under your skin in such a way that you just have to get up and dance?

For me – “Let’s dance!” by David Bowie is one such song;

Others I find irresistible are: “Dancing in the moonlight!” “Don’t blame on the sunshine... blame it on the boogie!” Others? Some of us here enjoyed a Ceilidh on Friday evening and I’m sure you found yourselves swept up onto the dance floor to join in!

As we celebrate Trinity Sunday one way of approaching God, “three in one”, is to get out of our heads and join in the dance.

So, I’d like to invite you along to a Greek wedding feast. The DJ will start up a song at which everyone rushes to the edge of the dance floor. The bride and groom start off the dance, stepping to the left, then to the right, followed by a few extra moves and then two by two others join in. The couple lead the line into the circle in an ever-tightening, weaving dance. As the dancers lace in and out, they start going faster and faster, but still maintaining their rhythm and synchronisation. Yet, eventually, they are dancing so quickly, that it becomes a blur. Even if part of a larger dance, they maintain their individual identities intact and unchanged.

You can understand how this circle dance gave theologians in the early Church a way of grasping this idea of God as three in one.

The Greek name for this kind of circular movement is perichoresis and it was thus introduced as a way of describing the inner life of God.

The Trinity as a circle dance, expresses a dynamic, flowing relationship between three persons, who keep their identity and yet fully belong to one another. This is not about competing and dominating the others in the dance, but about connection with one another, as one move gives way to another.

Let's use this dance motif to help us glimpse God as Trinity in our Scriptures / Gospel today.

Nicodemus comes at night to quiz Jesus. It's as if he is trying to understand the basic steps of the dance – from the edge of the circle, looking in. He's observing the choreography of one key dancer – Jesus. But he isn't sure where Jesus fits in, in relationship to God. He says “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God for now one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”

But what does this tell us about you and about God? Jesus' whole life, points to God and now he asks Nicodemus to be open to the Spirit of God, the third member of the Trinity. No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

Nicodemus, as a teacher of Israel, is used to studying sacred writings that brings a knowing often found in books. Here Jesus points him towards a **different kind of knowing**, a mystical or experiential knowing that embraces mind – yes – but also body and spirit. Jesus is opening a window onto the inner life of God which goes beyond the rules and practices that have shaped Nicodemus' life. Thinking of the dance motif, Jesus is inviting Nicodemus to move from watching on the edge, to join in the dance, into to join in the dance, into a dynamic relationship with the divine – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This invitation at the heart of the dance is inspired by LOVE. In Richard Rohr's words, from his book “The Divine Dance”, “This ancient doctrine (of Perchoresis) dared to affirm that *God is relationship itself*. The way of Jesus is an invitation to a way of living, loving and relating – on earth as it is in God.” “We are ... in a web of mutual interdependence. When we recognize it on a spiritual level, we call it *love*.”

God, who lovingly reaches out beyond God's self, coming among creation as God's Son, breathing life as the Spirit chooses. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, longing for everyone who believes in him to have eternal life: life fully with God, in the Spirit, now and into eternity. This is a different way of knowing God, an experiential knowing of mind, body and spirit.

You cannot really learn the steps of a dance by simply reading about them, or even if a great Caller tells you what to do! You still need to step up and try. The way to discover the dance is to participate, to live into it. It is not clear whether Nicodemus began to join in God's dance, in step with the spirit, after this conversation.

However, he appears right after Jesus' death carrying a load of myrrh and aloes. Together with Joseph of Arimathea, they wrap his broken body with spices in linen cloths (John 19.39-42) and lay him in the tomb. By now it seems that Nicodemus has joined in the divine dance.

This motif of interdependence is powerfully revealed in the natural world. Science continues to reveal the connectivity of matter from the smallest particles to the vast mountains across the lake. The more we realise how all things are connected and inter-dependent – the less we will dominate and exploit matter for our own purposes. Instead, we can see ourselves as part of the same dance of creation, stepping lightly and in synch with the natural order.

The Divine Dance of the Trinity, with a flow of life and love, and referencing one to the other to the next and back again, offers a pattern for the Church. Community is always a challenge to the ego, because our decisions and worship and outreach are about us, rather than what just suits ME, although we do not lose our individual God-given identity as children of the same heavenly father.

Take, for example, the survey about our Church Community day. Maybe it was the way the questions were framed, but some of the answers reflected what would work for ME, rather than thinking about what would help us grow as a whole church family, in faith and love. The Trinity speaks of God who reached out in love through the mystery of the Son, and who breathes the Spirit of love into our community, so that we can reach out to others to inspired and sustained by this same self-giving love.

For La Côte Church gift day this year, we have a flyer that expresses something of this dynamic relationship and interconnection with many spheres of life. An invitation for us today, to take away and mull over, is to step afresh into the divine dance, welcomed by the Father, known through the Son, and guided by the Spirit. Let's dance!