

## **SERMON – TRINITY SUNDAY (GIFT DAY) – 15.06.20025**

May I speak in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You may notice that I often start my sermons with that trinitarian prayer, and the prayer is especially appropriate today on Trinity Sunday.

And yes, as it is Trinity Sunday, the sermon will about the Trinity, but rather than the usual focus on trying to explain the mystery of the Trinity through various analogies, rather than thinking about the Trinity as an intellectual problem to be solved, which is tempting, I would like to speak about the Trinity as a reality in which we are called to live, especially in the light of today being also our La Côte Church Community Gift Day.

So, let's start with this: At the heart of the universe, there exists an eternal divine community of perfect love. The Bible refers to the members of this community as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Now, the Bible also says that God is love, but the only way God can be love is for God not to be a singular deity but to be a community of three divine persons, three yet inseparably one, an eternal community of love.

The nature of true love is not binding or limiting, but expansive. Love flows outwards; it grows. The creation of the universe is an overflow of love from that original divine community, which expands in love and delights to include all beloved creatures.

Some of the early church fathers used a Greek word to describe how the three members of the Trinity relate to one another in their oneness and their threeness, and that word is *perichoresis*. This word includes the idea of reciprocity, a kind of perfect, loving, mutual indwelling.

*Perichoresis* is also used to describe a Greek wedding dance where there are usually three dancers who move in circles, weaving in and out in a pattern of motion. As the dance progresses, they move faster and faster, all the while staying in perfect rhythm and synchronization with one another. Eventually they are dancing so quickly, yet seemingly effortlessly, that their movement seems to fuse into one. Yet they maintain their individual identities intact and unchanged.

The early church fathers, who were also theologians, adopted the word *perichoresis* to describe the reality of the Trinity, which they saw as a harmonious set of relationships in which there is mutual giving and receiving of love. For them, the Holy Trinity is not a stratified, top-down chain of command, nor an amorphous energy field of love, nor three gods who get along really well like the Three Musketeers. Each person of the Trinity is irreducibly and uniquely distinct, yet perfectly united in being, in love and purpose.

For the church fathers, the *perichoresis* of God is a dance of love, an eternal dance of the Father, Son and Spirit sharing love, honour, happiness, joy and respect, and living an eternal relationship of self-giving.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit not only embrace one another, they also permeate, contain and exist in one another. They move into each other; they belong to each other. How this happens is a divine mystery, but it is a mystery that we are invited to participate in. In our gospel reading, John the Evangelist records Jesus' words to his disciples that the Spirit of truth 'will guide us into all the truth', that he will glorify the Son, that everything the Father has is also the Son's, and the Spirit will declare it all to us.

The unity and the relationships between the three Persons of the Trinity are dynamic, interactive, loving and serving, and form the model for our human dance steps and relationships. God invites us into his dance of life, into relationship with him and with one another. And we can most assuredly join in this dance because as the apostle Paul stated in our New Testament reading, 'through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.'

We can respond to God's invitation. We can enter profoundly and be immersed in this divine dance. Our dance together with God allows us to bring compassion to this wounded world. In this dance, we learn not only to love God and to love one another, but together we can make a difference in this world, doing things that we may not have imagined or considered on our own.

There is one condition: to dance with the Trinity, we need to overcome worry about doing all the dance steps correctly! Dance is free and fun, and it is also loving and lively! The best way to enjoy God's dance is to let the Holy Trinity captivate our hearts with their tune and draw us into their dance of giving ourselves away to serve others, loving and honouring them above ourselves.

Yes, of course, we will sometimes step on someone's toes. I'm speaking from experience from having my toes trodden on by Chris when we used to try out the waltz and foxtrot. But I still love him. We might worry about stepping out of line in the dance. I started line dancing this year with a group from the International Women's Club of Nyon. As Chris is not involved, my toes are safe and are not stepped on but staying in line and facing the same direction as the other dancers after a turn, that is still a challenge for me. Fortunately, or to be more precise, through the grace and mercy of God, the beauty of *God's* dance is that he is in control and always invites us back, gently and lovingly correcting our missteps. All we have to do is accept the invitation of the Triune God and step out onto the dance floor.

There is a Presbyterian theologian called Cynthia Holder Rich and I would like to quote her:

It is no wonder, then, that we in the community of those who follow Jesus (and thus follow God the Father, and follow the Spirit), that we are called into this divine dance – and equipped to gather others to take part in the dance with others. We serve a God who is essentially, intimately relational. We serve a God who is essentially, happily non-hierarchical. We serve a God whose relationships and relationality assist us and encourage us and calls us into the relationship with him, with each other, and with the community of all God's creatures. This should set the stage for us to become people who can live into and live out relationships marked by love and grace.

The Holy Trinity is central to our faith, is the beating heart of worship, is the dynamism of the sacraments, the backbone of our creeds, the source of all our gifts, and the assurance of our prayers. The ever-giving Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the original and eternal community of love out of which we were created, and this One Holy Trinity is our true and eternal home.

Amen.