

# The Catholic Parish of Petworth & Midhurst West Sussex

## Fr Peter's Homily for The Most Holy Trinity (Year C) 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Every time we celebrate Mass, the priest begins and ends with the same words: '...The Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit'. And as we hear these words in the invocation at the start of Mass and the blessing at the end, both times we do the same thing: we mark our bodies with the sign of the cross, top to bottom and side to side. As the priest calls down for us the Holy Trinity, we move our hands as if we are wrapping ourselves in the Trinity, enfolding ourselves within it.

These words and gestures call to mind for us the fact that, when we come into God's presence for worship, we are placing ourselves in the presence of the Trinity, we are wrapping ourselves within, we are slipping into this triad of love and service. Even if I am alone, praying alone or celebrating Mass alone, as I speak these words and make this gesture I am inserting myself within this community of God: I am not really alone, nor am I really part of a duet, me and God: I am a part of a ready built community of persons: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Trinity delight in one another. It is delightful for the Father to look on the face of the Son, and for each of them to be washed in the Holy Spirit, and so on. Three persons, each delightful and each delighting in the others. And as I wrap myself in the Trinity, I slip into this dance of delight, and place myself there, and this is prayer: simply being there and looking on with awe as the three persons of the Trinity delight in one another. And as they rush from one to another with such joy, having place myself within the dance, I find they are delighting in me, too – as the first reading says, 'delighting to be with the sons of men'.

Sitting quietly in an empty church, or an empty room, or on a bench by a river, or wherever it may be, slipping myself gently into the life of the Trinity, I witness their delight in one another, and more extraordinary than that, I find my presence magnifies their delight. God delights to be with the children of men. Observing all this, with a sort of awe, I realise a wonderful truth: God is not, never has been, and never could be, a distant, remote and lonely God. He is always three persons caught up in delight, he is always connection, he is always a relationship. God takes delight in relationship, in connectedness, in being with, and being for, others.

This explains something that we all know about human nature, namely that human happiness depends on experiencing love. A child cannot grow into a happy and mature adult unless it experiences love; an adult cannot form lasting, mutual and life-giving relationships unless they have experienced love; no human being can go to bed at night

happy unless they have experienced, or are experiencing, love. Human beings are created in the image of God; God is a community of love and delight, so it is no surprise that human beings find fulfilment in loving and being loved. Love alone can make us happy, love alone can make our lives fulfilled. We watch the Trinity buzzing and fizzing with delight and joy, and we can see that it is true: human beings find meaning in relationship, not in isolation. It can be very tempting to hide ourselves away sometimes: we are frightened of rejection, or scared that we will not fit in, or anxious that people will look at us and not like what they see; but the truth is that these fears and anxieties always make us less human, less real, less like the person we were each meant to be.

Sometimes we look at the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and think 'That is hard to understand'. But to ask 'what does it mean?' is to ask the wrong question. To insist on trying to understand how it works is to distract ourselves from the truth. 'If you understand, it isn't God' St Augustine tells us, and of course it must be so: a God that we can completely understand would have to be smaller than I am, and so not really God at all. I am content to say 'I do not understand how The Trinity works, and that is ok by me. I know God, and he knows me; I watch how he is filled with delight at dwelling among the sons of men, and that seems good enough for me.

This Sunday we celebrate our First holy Communion, and in a way there is no better day for this than Trinity Sunday. We gently slip our young people into the lively dance of delight that the Trinity makes every moment of every day. We wrap ourselves, and our young people, in the Trinity, which only ever stops its movement, its dance, its whirling, energetic progress for a moment, at that point when each of us stands at the altar with our mouths open, and for a moment the Trinity looks on us and says: 'You are delightful – come, join the dance'