

Isaiah 6.1-8; Romans 8.12-17; John 3.1-17

Last Sunday, we celebrated Pentecost. The birthday of the church, and especially for Holy Comforter as it was our patronal festival. Pentecost is the day the Spirit came with wind and fire and settled on the disciples. The day that they found themselves speaking in tongues - people from all different countries could understand what they were saying. The day that God was tangibly present once again, after Jesus had ascended into heaven and was no longer on earth. Pentecost is a spiritual whirlwind, a jump-start of the Christian church.

And during our Pentecost service last week, very appropriately, we baptised one of the newest members of the church, and welcomed Reilly into the Christian family.

Now some of you might not know this, because we almost always baptise people here in church during a service, and it is done by a priest, but actually, anybody is able to conduct a baptism. There are just two things that are necessary for it to be a legitimate baptism.

Firstly, you need water. Secondly, you have to use a certain combination of words.

Does anyone know what the words are that you have to use? In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These words come up all over the place in our liturgy. We invoke the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit when we baptise, when we marry and bury people, when we celebrate the eucharist, when we say a blessing, and when we say the Collect, the Gloria and the Creed. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are always all there. The Trinity.

We affirm our belief in the Trinity over and over and over again. But why? Why is it so important? Why can't we just say we believe in God and that be enough? Why is this three in one conundrum that we can't really understand a vital part of our faith?

Well, I believe it is because of what it tells us about God.

In the very beginning, God says, 'let us make humankind, in our image.' God is plural, not singular, and this is the image that we are created in. We are

made as relational beings who need and thrive in the company of others. There's a reason that solitary confinement is such a devastating form of punishment, and it's because when we are isolated, we suffer. Even if we are raging introverts who love to spend days on end by ourselves, there is still a need for interaction. We are fundamentally creatures of community.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three in one, the trinity in relationship.

It's very appropriate that the church calendar marks Trinity Sunday the week after Pentecost. We've seen in the last few months the relational dance of God weaving earth and heaven together. Jesus has come, carried out his ministry, been killed, risen again, and returned to heaven. The Spirit has been sent, as a dove at Jesus' baptism, guiding him through the wilderness, and then among us, and the disciples know now that God will always be with them. God is very present.

There is an ongoing communication and movement in this dance, this story, this arc of unfolding. And in this story of God among us, the story of the gospel, we are invited to join in the love of godself as it widens the circle of knowing and being known.

The Bible is pretty clear about the nature of God: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."

It is the mystery of the Trinity that allows for God to be love. To know God, we must know love. To love, we must know God, for God is love. And nobody can love in isolation. Nobody can love without having that relationship with the other, the object of their love. Even God could not love without having relationship, without being in communion with an object of love. So the Trinity is what makes God to be the God we worship, the God among us, the God inviting us to join the dance drawing heaven into earth and earth into heaven.

It is also God's nature as love which defines sin as being relational damage. An easy way to understand sin is to think of it as being anything which is damaging to our relationship with either God or another person, and this includes caring for ourselves, because we are also the object of love. The ten commandments can all be put into this framework, and if you spend a moment to think of what we would consider to be sins, they can

probably all be viewed as relational damage in some way.

Instead, we are called to be holy. To be holy as God is holy. 'Holy, holy, holy', cry the Seraphs. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

'How can these things be?!' asks Nicodemus, baffled by Jesus and the strange things he says about God. 'You must be born of water and Spirit' replies Jesus.

Through baptism, through being part of this body of Christ gathered here, we are brought consciously into the love which is Godself. It's our story, to be wrapped in this mystery of Trinity, always moving with the wind of the Spirit as we grow into whatever the next chapter of this relationship holds. We seek to love, to be love to others, to love ourselves, to guard and cherish our faith in wholeness and holiness as we dwell with our God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.