



Holy Trinity

THE NEW SHOFAR

**All we do we are to do in the Holy name
of God - Father, Son and Spirit**

What on earth is the Holy Trinity?

Trying to talk about the Blessed Trinity in ways that are understandable to most of us is a challenge few are prepared to take on. After academic courses at both the undergraduate and post graduate levels, I still struggle to make some sense of the theology. And yet, it is the cornerstone of the content of our faith. Without a living Trinity, our religious beliefs are hollow. Because it is very much the theological foundation on which our religious life grows, we need to have some understanding.

Theology growing out of a response to heresy

This might come as a surprise but there is no mention of the Trinity in the Bible. Given its strong Jewish heritage, this is to be expected. It was only with the growing influence of Greek philosophy and theology that a theology of the three persons in the one God could be developed. The Bible does talk about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but does not reflect much on their relationship.

The advance of trinitarian theology came about as the Church struggled to come to terms with heretical teaching and there have been lots of these down through history - and each one of them, in their own way, weakened the power of God at work in creation and the very nature of God's united divinity. As is the case in all areas of faith, these heresies have arisen out of sinful hubris. Men with great minds trying to create the Living God in the way a human being would want God to be like. They incorrectly reasoned that the wonderful human intelligence which helps them master so many areas of life, should be able to master God as well.

The quotation above comes from the Catechism and it strongly urges us to have a living understanding of the Trinity. It emphasises how the mystery of the Trinity is not only the most important teaching of our faith (i.e. the most important thing *that we can know*), but it is also the central mystery of Christian *life* (i.e. the most important thing *for how we live*). But how can that be? What difference does it make to my life whether God is one or three or 15?

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the 'hierarchy of the truths of faith'"

The real question we are pursuing is – who is God? This is an invitation we all need to answer. The answer impacts on our relationship with God and with our neighbour. If we come up with the wrong answer, then we can end up worshipping a false god.

Can we learn something about the Trinity from the Bible?

The Bible tells us that God is one but at the same time, God is not solitary. God is a **communion** of Father, Son and Spirit. There is only one divine nature, but that one divine nature expresses itself as three distinct persons. **Note the importance here.** God exists in a relationship. God by nature is relational. This is why John can write in his Gospel that *God is love*. Love presumes a relationship, an outflowing of love from one to another. St Augustine expressed this beautifully: *if you see love, you see the three — the one who loves (the Father), the one who is loved (the Son) and the love itself (the Holy Spirit)*. He understood that it was not possible to say *I Love* without saying who or what I love.

This means every time we truly love we are participating in the life of God because God is love. Jesus helps us understand this link between the divine life and our human loving. He invites us to be *his friends*, to *join in fellowship*, to share in His life. Thus, when we truly love our end goal is God - because...God is love and is the perfect example of love. Jesus is the fullest and most perfect experience of God's unconditional love. To allow Jesus to infuse us with His love enables us to love others in the same way. Jesus is not a message from God but is God's love made incarnate for us.

*God is not
solitude, but
perfect
communion. For
this reason the
human person,
created in the
image of God,
realises himself or
herself in love,
which is a sincere
gift of self.
Benedict XVI*

Love is the goal and the means of Christian living

We all understand this way of thinking. It is so important for us to be loved and to have opportunities to love. At a range of different levels in our daily lives we seek to be in harmony with those around us – family, friends, work colleagues, neighbours. We want to do this without feeling we are diminished as a person. This is what Christian marriage is about – loving another for who they are and being loved by another for who we are. This kind of love and loving is an imperfect imitation of the love that is the Trinity. How do we know all of this? Because God revealed the inner reality of the Godhead (a word meaning the unity of Father, Son and Spirit) in the sending of His Son. Through Him, we experience God in outflowing love. It would then be more accurate to say that God is *love-flowing-out* from the Godhead into every created reality. We love we have, we experience and share is but a taste of the divine reality.

Thus Trinity Sunday is a call to love more purely, more earnestly and unconditionally. Our response to the call of Pentecost is to be God's love in the world, to make real in the lives of those who live in darkness, God's love for them.

**Produced by Bishop Michael Hough for the Disciples of Christ -
anathoth.hough@gmail.com - www.houghongod.com**