

John 16: 12-15 and Romans 5 1-5 Trinity

Revd Rachel Sturt

Prayer; may I speak in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen.

What an exciting day! It's Trinity Sunday, (I can see that you are thrilled), it's Fathers' Day, the RSCM concert, the picnic, the tug of war and ice cream!None of these things would be any fun at all on our own (except maybe the ice cream). Humans have to be in relationships. One of the many lessons we learned from the Covid pandemic is that we all need each other.

We thought we could stay at home and stay safe, but of course, we needed teachers and police and food and petrol. As time went by, we found we needed hairdressers and libraries and people to love. We were made for relationships, in fact. We long to love and be loved. It took a crisis to make us realise.

You will have noticed that our readings today do not explicitly mention the word '*Trinity*'. In fact, the word does not appear in the Bible at all. It was invented in the third century by a theologian called Tertullian to

explain the concept of God being Father, Son and Holy Spirit simultaneously.

The idea of the Trinity is a human response to the teaching of Jesus about God the Father who sent him and the Holy Spirit who was going to follow after.

But how do we understand this? We probably can't. I remember as a child of about three years old, my mother took a piece of plasticine and broke it into three to help me to grasp the concept of three in one. It must have made an impact, or I would not be standing here today. She also made me learn Holy Holy Holy off by heart. She was pretty ambitious.

I have thought of a better way to bring the idea of The Trinity to life.

(Divide congregation into three D F# A and ask all to hum to make a nice chord). (Ask choristers on Front row, what is that called? Triad). All are lovely on their own, but together they make a beautiful chord- a triad.

And just as they are in relationship with each other, we need to live this way too- in a harmonious relationship, with no one considering themselves better than the others.

And as we think about relationships; it's Fathers' Day! Of course, it is not really a church festival (and could be seen as just an excuse to sell cards and beer glasses), but I think it is always good to celebrate all fathers everywhere. Fathers may be terrible, or absent or even evil, but all behaviour has a reason. People who are not loved find it hard to be loving themselves.

When I used to work in a psychiatric unit, I saw this time and time again. My sister, who works in prison education, reports that a huge number of prisoners have experienced a sad childhood with an absent or abusive father. But God, our heavenly Father, loves us. He loved us before we were born. He will love us forever. When Jesus prayed, he used the term Abba which means Daddy in Aramaic. We too can come to God in the same way. When we say that God's name is hallowed, we mean that he is both close and awesome.

But relationships can go wrong. What happens when there is discord?

(Now ask all to sing D F# A and A flat – a discordant chord) Life is often like this! I spent last weekend in Coventry, a city that suffered hugely in the Blitz, with much of the centre annihilated and thousands of people killed on the night of November 14th 1940.

I was at a service to install the new bishop, and one of the many speakers was a representative from the German city of Dresden, which the Allies (people on the British side) bombed extensively. He spoke movingly of reconciliation, rebirth and forgiveness. In the new cathedral, there is a cross of charred wood which remained from the fallen roof timbers of the ruined medieval cathedral with the simple words '*Father, forgive*'.

If you just send Dad a card on Father's Day and don't bother to speak to him the rest of the year, is that a relationship? And our relationship with God is no use at all if it is *only* worship, or *only* social. I have met many people who say, '*you don't need to go to church to be a Christian*'.

The trouble with that is that it is like a coal that falls out of the fire. It soon goes out. And if our faith is all words and buildings, it is hollow. What good does it do? Everyone we meet, every encounter prepares us for encountering God. Our mission is not to be safe and good, but is loving service, proclaiming the Good News, challenging injustice, safeguarding the earth, teaching and baptising. And it won't be harmonious; it will probably get us into trouble.

All this sounds a tall order! But we are not alone. We have the power of the Holy Spirit. Last week at Pentecost we heard how the Holy Spirit fell upon the new disciples and swept them from inside a building to the crowd outside. They were just ordinary people who came as they were. And this is how we can come to God, imperfect, sad, broken, full of questions, wondering what to do next.

Relationships are risky. As we think of fathers today, we may feel gratitude and love for our own- and if he is here today, please tell him! Or perhaps we have painful memories of when things were not so good.

But remember that we do not have to live by our own strength. The mistakes we make and the sins we commit can be turned into something good, greater wisdom, better forgiveness and renewal. Peace and reconciliation are a process which may never come to an end. Jesus came to reconcile us to our heavenly Father. His Spirit lives in us today.

So now, are you thrilled about Trinity Sunday?

Amen