



# Sunday Reflection

## Season of Easter

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 30 May 2021

# Trinity Sunday

Trinity Sunday brings to a close to the salvation narrative that began in Advent and marks the return to liturgical "Ordinary Time". God is gloriously revealed in three persons, present in the ordinary day to day, as well as the great festivals of life and faith.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."** John 3.16

**"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God...and if children, then heirs, heirs with God and joint heirs with Christ."** Romans 8.14, 17.

### An Illustration to set the scene

Robi Dameli's son, David died while he was a student. Ikhlas lost her father while he was driving through their village. Robi is an Israeli mother whose son was killed by a Palestinian sniper and Ikhlas is a Palestinian mother whose father was shot by a German Israeli settler. Yet, they have become allies in the movement to spread understanding and advocate together for peace, brought together through a remarkable charity called Parent Circle. Through meetings of reconciliation, bereaved parents from both sides of the divide in Israel-Palestine come to

understand what it is like to be in the shoes of the other, so that their separation is transformed into understanding, unity and the desire for reconciliation and peace.

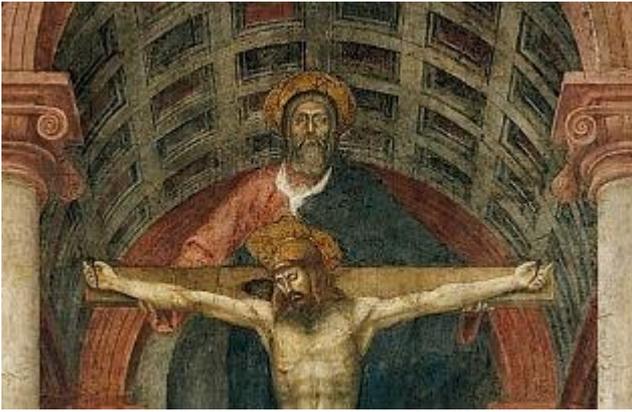
## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

The Bible readings set for today tell a story of how God has revealed Godself to us. The God in the prophet Isaiah's vision is so huge that the hem of his garment fell the Temple. We owe him honour and worship and can only join the angels in saying 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. It is understandable that the prophet felt unworthy in the face of such glory. Only a burning coal could wipe away his sense of sin so that he could say, 'Here am I. Send me'.

Our Psalm, Psalm 29, expresses the almighty power of a Creator God whose voice thunders across the universe. Fast forward to Jesus's encounter with Nicodemus, as told to us by St John. Nicodemus may be a senior religious leader, but his understanding is imperfect. Miraculous signs are to him evidence that Jesus is sent from God like a prophet of old. Jesus invites him, as it were, to raise his eyes from the ground from only seeing what is before him and to perceive the new spiritual truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, sent to free us from our sins and redeem us by showing us a way to believe in him. Jesus said, 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10.30). We know God through Jesus and that changes everything.

Do you ever think about the fact that it is only through the New Testament that we come to call God Father, the form of address that Our Lord used. I get goosebumps every time I've led the Daily office for us and said 'We join all our prayers together in the words that Jesus taught us – Our Father...' It is through God's revelation of Godself in the person of Jesus that we come to have a personal relationship with God.

In St John's beautiful words, Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love. God's desire for our salvation is so great that he empties that love into offering the sacrifice of his only Son for us, giving us the choice to choose life over death, light over darkness. In Masaccio's image of the Trinity God holds up the Son on the cross while



the Spirit rests as a dove upon him.

In the years I was working in other organisations, having I thought lost the expectation of being able to serve God in his church, I used to put a CD into my computer and listen over and over to the [choir of St Paul's singing these words from Stainer's setting of them](#) – 'God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him'. It overcome my sense of not being good enough by surrounding me with the grace of God's love for the world.

And so, to St Paul's magnificent words to the Romans, the final piece of the jigsaw. For he explains what that Sonship means for us. That dynamic love in which Father flows into Son and Son into Father, has been shared with us through Christ's sacrifice. We too can access that love and that redeeming power. We are God's children too. The holy and glorious ineffable God is also our Father. As in Rublev's famous icon, there is a place for us at the table.

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of God's love is planted in our hearts. Not only are our debts forgiven, but we are strengthened and nourished to act in the ways that Jesus showed us and God desires for us: to forgive as we are forgiven, to forgive those that sin against us. It is the light of the Spirit

that helps us express in our lives the gifts of grace that we have been given.

So, when we come to say the Nicene creed, we know how fortunate we are that God has revealed to us Godself in so many dimensions – as the holy God who created all things and holds us and all creation in life, as the Son whose self-giving love gives us the freedom to pray for ourselves and each other and as the Spirit whose gentle promptings lead us to follow the Way. Put another way, 'God over us, God for us and, God within us' (Migliore).

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

Augustine described God's nature, as 'a society of love'. Through Christ and by the Holy Spirit, we know that love to be a self-emptying love, a love that desires to share itself for our sake: as the theologian Migliore expresses it: 'a self-expending, other-affirming, community-building love'. For us then, there is no mystery about the kind of new life God desires for us. We know ourselves as persons, not creatures, and as persons we are constituted in relation to others. The members of Parent Circle have come to that realisation. Only by extending hospitality and forgiveness to the 'other' who has perpetrated the deepest possible hurt, can they become advocates of peace. As Paul wrote: 'For through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit to the Father.' (Ephesians 2.18).

The love that makes room for the other is a love that frees us to love, yet paradoxically we find our identity in wholehearted commitment and belonging. Of all the poets John Donne expressed it with the greatest power:

Batter my heart, three-personed God ...  
Take me to you, imprison mee, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free.

Nicodemus seems to have made that journey, for we catch a glimpse of him later bringing spices to anoint our Lord's body. And all of us, freed to take up the new life offered when we were baptised in the

name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, can say; 'Here am I, send me'. We come to that in community. Thank you for the hospitality and fellowship you have extended to me that brings me to the place in which, leaning solely on the help of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I will be able to declare that publicly and with confidence.

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Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God's spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**