

Santiago de Compostela Anglican Chaplaincy

Sunday 7th June 2020

Readings for today: Psalm 8; Matthew 28:16-20; Isa 40:12-17, 27-31.



Welcome to the Anglican Chaplaincy 'virtual' service... virtually a service, but not quite! My name is Miriam, and I am just as unhappy not to be actually standing in Santa Susana as chaplain for the next couple of weeks as I am sure most of you are at not having been able to make pilgrimage there. However, I do hope that you are finding the prayers and reflections from the chaplaincy team interesting and helpful.

One advantage is that we can all stay connected in this way, reaching many more pilgrims than would be in Santiago on any given Sunday.

I begin with the collect for Trinity Sunday:

Holy God, faithful and unchanging:

Enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
And draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
That we may truly worship you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

A poem for Trinity Sunday by Malcolm Guite

In the beginning, not in time or space,
But in the quick before both space and time,
In Life, in Love, in co-inherent Grace,
In three in one and one in three, in rhyme,
In music, in the whole creation story,
In his own image, his imagination,
The Triune Poet makes us for his glory,
And makes us each the other's inspiration.
He calls us out of darkness, chaos, chance,
To improvise a music of our own,
To sing the chord that calls us to the dance,
Three notes resounding from a single tone,
To sing the End in whom we all begin;
Our God beyond, beside us, and within.



For those of you who don't know this, within some clergy teams there is often a joke that whoever gets to preach on Trinity Sunday has drawn the short straw. It isn't the easiest thing to talk about; I read somewhere that if you try to talk about the Trinity for more than a few minutes, you will slip into heresy. This is all too easy to do when trying to explain something that is actually quite unfathomable.

We can learn and recite the non-heretical teaching of the Church about the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons of one substance. But this doesn't really help us understand the Trinity.

There is a story about the great theologian, Augustine of Hippo. One day after he had been writing about the Trinity for a while, he decided to take a break and go for a walk along the beach. He came across a boy who had a bucket. He would fill up the bucket, run up the hill, and dump the water into the sand. He did this over and over until finally Augustine stopped the boy and asked, "What are you doing?" The boy said, "I am draining the sea into the sand." Augustine pointed out the futility of the task, and the boy replied, "Yes, but I will drain the sea before you understand the Trinity."

Well, if Augustine couldn't figure it out, we're not going to figure it out either.



Quite honestly, I don't think that matters. What matters is that through contemplating the Trinity, we contemplate the vastness of God. In this way, we catch a glimpse of the breadth of the activity and personality of God, and begin to broaden our understanding about what the work of God looks like in the world.

In his poem, Malcolm Guite speaks of God calling us out of darkness, chaos and chance, to join in his song of Life, Love and Grace. Three notes resounding from a single tone, and an invitation to us to sing the chord and join the dance.

This resonates with our current experience; instead of speaking to you today from the lectern in Santa Susana, I am here in isolation at home in the UK, and you, dear reader, are elsewhere in the world, all of us in a state of unknowing, some of us fearful, some upset that our pilgrimage plans have been disrupted. We may be angry, resigned, grieving or in denial. There is no doubt that what we are experiencing is not what we would have chosen, but perhaps feels very much like darkness, chaos and chance.

Yet people all over have been improvising a music of their own. There are countless stories of love, generosity and kindness. There has been an abundance of new

found creativity; imaginative photographs taken from a small balcony with a wonderful view of the sky, creative ways of raising funds to aid those whose livelihoods are suffering, communities joining together in song from balconies and gardens, and storytelling to encourage those whose own stories are on hold as they wait immobile in lockdown.

Birdsong is being heard once again in places where folk had forgotten what it sounded like. Perhaps, if we take a moment to listen, we will also begin to hear afresh the 'three notes resounding from a single tone.

I am also reminded of C.S. Lewis's 'The Magicians Nephew' (the first book in the Chronicles of Narnia), where Aslan the lion (representing God the Father), 'sings' Narnia into being. Lewis probably had in mind here the truth that creation was accomplished, not by the Father alone, but through the Word of God (John 1:1), by the power of the Holy Spirit; the Trinity.

But what of the dance?

There is a lovely Greek word which is used to describe the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity; perichoresis. I mention it only because there is no direct English translation. It suggests the mutual indwelling of the three parts of the Holy Trinity; all three parts are equal and their identities are based in each other. But perichoresis is not a static concept. It has the same root as choreography. This Divine Trinitarian relationship is like a dance, and we are invited to join in that dance as we enter ever deeper into relationship with God.

This dance is one to which all are invited, regardless of ability or agility, and this song is one which even the tone deaf can sing. So, friends, let us endeavour to make a real song and dance of it, throughout these days of uncertainty and through into our future journeys, not being confused by the mystery of the Trinity but delighting in it.



Isaiah 40:28,29

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

Prayers

God of compassion,
Have mercy upon our world
In this time of fear and confusion:
We bring before you those who are suffering
And those who tend to their needs;
May those in isolation know your comfort and your company
And may neighbours show your love
In works of care, kindness and prayer;
We pray for the lost and the lonely
The fearful, the forgotten, the forlorn;
We pray for health care workers and medics
And all engaged in scientific research
And we pray too for those upon whose shoulders
The yoke of leadership rests,
That in their conversation and communication
Your still small voice may be heard;
We ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit,
Through the One who stretched out his hands

To bless and to heal
Even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Final Greetings and Benediction

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. *2 Cor 13:11-13*

Ultreĩa e suseia

