

Trinity Sunday (A)

Sharing in the Divine Dance

Genesis 1:1 - 2:4a; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20

What do we learn about God? The Catechism in *A New Zealand Prayer Book* asks that very question, and offers this answer:

God is eternal, earth maker, pain bearer, life giver; source of all that is and shall be; father and mother of us all. We learn that God is one, yet revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹

This is what we call the doctrine of the Trinity. While this doctrine is at the heart of Christian faith, the word *Trinity* itself doesn't appear in the Bible. But the reality to which it points is woven through Scripture, and we hear that in today's readings.

Paul prays that the Corinthians may know "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." And at the end of Matthew's Gospel, the risen Jesus sends his disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptising them "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Such phrases are building blocks from which the doctrine of the Trinity was gradually shaped by the early church and formally expressed in the fourth century. Yet even at its best, theology can't capture God; it can only point towards God. We may experience God, we may believe in God, we may trust God, but we can't tie God down. As someone remarked, when we try to describe God, we're like a bunch of oysters trying to describe a ballerina. We simply don't have the equipment to fully comprehend the mystery that God is.

The doctrine of the Trinity didn't drop out of the sky. It grew out of people's experience of God. As our Christian forebears reflected on what God had done, on what had happened among them in Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Holy Spirit, they searched for language big enough to speak of the mystery they had encountered. Above all, they found themselves experiencing a love so deep, so profound, that it changed how they understood God, one another, and themselves. One New Testament writer puts it this way:

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. (1 John 4:7)

Love is fulfilled in relationship. If God is love, then relationship belongs not merely to what God does but to who God *is*. The Trinity is a way of saying that within the very life of God there is eternal communion, eternal self-giving, eternal love.

So, God isn't remote, sealed off, or enclosed in some distant spiritual realm. God is always moving toward us: creating, calling, redeeming, sanctifying; drawing us, again and again, into the life of divine love. God is a constant loving presence within the drama of our lives: not watching from a distance but intimately involved.

The life of the Trinity has sometimes been spoken of as a kind of divine dance: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit delighting in one another in an eternal movement of love. And as they dance, the 'sparks' of their love fly outward, creating, reconciling, healing, and transforming. It's an image, of course, not a definition. But it's a way of saying that the love that is God, is so vibrant and generous that it overflows into creation – into us.

This why the reading from Genesis is helpful. Humankind is created in the image of God. And if God's image – which we bear – is relational, then we too are made for relationship: for communion with God, and for life-giving fellowship with one another.

The renowned spiritual writer, Thomas Merton, spoke of love as our true identity. He said:

¹ ANZPB-HKMoA, 927

To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love... Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name. If, therefore, I do anything or think anything or say anything or know anything that is not purely for the love of God, it cannot give me peace, or rest, or fulfilment, or joy.²

We're created in the image of God – and if God is love, then we're created in the likeness of love. So, whenever we love, however imperfectly, something of God's image shines through us. In loving, we become more truly who we are.

The dance between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit – the life of God – isn't something we simply admire from afar. In baptism we're plunged into the middle of it. At our baptism, we were immersed in the mystery of God, who's very being is love.

So, when Jesus says, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," he's not merely giving us a formula to recite. He's entrusting us with a mission: to draw others into this life, to teach the way of Christ, and to bear witness to the love in which the world was made and for which the world longs.

Of course, what I'm saying, and what far wiser people than I've said, can never contain God. The mystery of the Trinity will always be more than we can explain. But it's not less than this: God made known to us in Jesus Christ and poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit is God who is living, self-giving love.

No formula will ever adequately describe God, just as our words can never fully do justice to our experience of loving and being loved. And that love isn't an abstract idea. It's a life to be received and shared. So, when we choose compassion over indifference, mercy over resentment, forgiveness over bitterness, reconciliation over division, justice over complacency, and peace over hostility, we aren't simply behaving well. We're being drawn more deeply into the life of God. We're joining the divine dance. We're becoming what we were created to be. We're learning, by grace, to live in the likeness of God who is love.

Holy and loving God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
draw us again into your life of love.
Rekindle in us the grace of our baptism,
that we may share in your compassion and mercy.
May the sparks of your love
be seen in who we are and in what we do.
Make us instruments of your healing, transforming, renewing love.
Hear this prayer for your love's sake.

Alister Hendery
Waiapu Cathedral – 31.5.2026

² Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Books, 1972), 60-61.