

The Most Holy Trinity
Sunday 7th June 2020



You may have gathered over these last few months that I find Icons to be both inspiring and revealing. They are not mere paintings to be stared at but windows that allow you to glimpse the divine. I have always found them useful in prayer and when trying to grapple with the great mysteries of our faith. The Icon above, by the Russian monk Andrei Rublev who died in the early 14th century, is called The Trinity. As today is Trinity Sunday I thought it would be good to reflect on this heavenly image that has become, for many faithful, a window that sheds light on the mystery of God the Most Holy Trinity.

'The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God himself. It is therefore the source of all other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them.' (Catechism #234)

That simple statement above, *'It is the mystery of God Himself'*, reminds us that God the Trinity can't be an abstract notion at the back of our minds but a reality that we embrace daily. The Trinity is the reality of God who is everything. He is the answer to all our questions. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all our lives. He is the God who gives purpose to our being. He is the source of all true Love.

Rublev in his Icon depicts God as the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each of the Persons has and continues to touch our lives. There are all kinds of theories about which angelic being is the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit but it is almost impossible to guess their identities. Rublev has done this on purpose I think because, as we know, God is one in three persons. Each person of the Trinity is God whole and entire, divinity is not swapped or shared among themselves. As the Catechism states:

'The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the "consubstantial Trinity"... "The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is..."

(Catechism #253)

By not being able to label the three angelic beings in the Icon reminds us that though they are seated as three distinct persons they are but One God. This unity is emphasised by the fact that they are all sitting around a table. No one person is better than the other, no one person is superior to the other, all sit as one, bonded in love for each other.

You will notice that all three are holding a staff in their hands. A staff is the sign of being on a journey and God the Trinity is definitely on a journey – with us! Throughout our lives God is always present.

'Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...' (Mt 28:19)

As babies we are baptised in the name of the Trinity and from there begins our pilgrimage in life. Every step we take, every decision we make, our every thought and word never escapes the attention of God. Throughout our lives God the Father is lavishing us with His love, in Jesus Christ the Son, who we encounter through the power of the Holy Spirit. At Mass God the Father is praised and adored because he has given us the gift of Jesus His Son. It is our Lord who offers himself as the sacrificial victim for our salvation and is present on the Altar by the power and working of the Holy Spirit. If we stop, look and contemplate we will always see the ever loving hand of God the Trinity reaching out to us in our lives.

You will notice that the three persons of the Trinity are seated around not just a table but an Altar. How do we know this? Rublev has placed a chalice on the Altar with the image of a lamb inside it, this is the Eucharist. In the Eucharist we come into the very presence of God himself.

‘Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and then we shall be satisfied.’ ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip,’ Jesus said to him ‘and yet you still do not know who I am? To have seen me is to have seen the Father! So how can you say, ‘Let us see the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work.’ (Jn 14: 8–10)

Jesus reminds the disciples that to know him is to know the Father. To be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is to be in the presence of not just the Risen Jesus but of the Father also; And of course who brings us to know Jesus first? God the Holy Spirit.

‘...The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.’ (Jn 14:26)

When we pray before the Tabernacle or make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament during Exposition then we come into the very presence of God the Most Holy Trinity.



There is a subtle invitation for all of us in Rublev's Icon. Do you see the space between the two angelic figures seated on the left and right of the Icon? Can you see the gap in between them at the front of the Altar? Notice how all three persons of the Trinity use at least one of their hands to gesture towards that space. We are being invited by God to pull up a chair and be seated with him at the great Heavenly Banquet. God wants us! Rublev has painted one of the best images of heaven. He has painted that loving desire of God who yearns for us, His

children, to be seated with Him at his table of Eternal Love. There are no fluffy clouds or mythical parties and raucous get together's but the concrete reality of a God who wants us to be with him, united in that circle of Love. That is paradise, that is God the Most Holy Trinity! Amen.

On a different note some of you may have seen the Bishop on the news last week in regards to the future opening up of churches and other places of public worship. Yesterday I received this email from the diocesan communications office:

'The Archbishops have finalised, and are now publishing, their directives for the re-opening of the churches. Please read the policy very carefully. These directives are conditions and not guidelines for re-opening. A date for re-opening churches has still not been confirmed. All churches must be inspected and authorised for opening before they are opened for Private Prayer.'

(Salford Diocese Communications Department)

The good news is that there is now movement towards opening churches but with no confirmed dates as yet. You can see from the above statement that the government and diocesan authorities are very clear that particular conditions must be met and will be inspected.

As we await further information and updates from the diocese I would like to again appeal for volunteers. Some people have come forward but sadly with self-isolation, vulnerability, age and underlying health issues they have had to withdraw. One of the official conditions for the re-opening of churches is that there should be a good number of volunteers for marshalling and cleaning when the church is open for private silent prayer. Without the generosity and goodness of people coming forward it will affect our future re-opening. I appeal to all our parish family who can safely volunteer to please email me:

sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

Parishioners have contacted me in regards to making donations but not through the online system provided by the diocese. If people would like to donate making cheques payable to 'St. Mary's R.C Church' then we can bank these via the Post Office. One parishioner rather than saving her collection each week and waiting until she can return to church has decided to donate it via cheque. Thank you to all those who have donated online and set up direct-debits.

When I receive more news and information from the diocese I will let you know.

God Bless and keep praying

Fr. O'Brien