

The other day, whilst home-schooling Sophie, I was trying to explain to her what I thought was a pretty simple concept – I can't even remember what it was now. But every time I thought I had got the message home came the question "why?" leading me into more in depth analysis until eventually, exasperated, I simply said "because it just is!" No points for me! At the moment of not being able to explain any further, or frustrated that this simple point was not being understood, I pushed *The Mystery Button*. I went for the dogmatic approach rather than allowing time and space for exploration of the idea.

Today, as we celebrate God who has revealed himself to us as one God yet 3 persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is a huge temptation for preachers across the world to simply say "it's a mystery – live with it!" – to push *The Mystery Button*. Ultimately they are right. The Divine inter-relation of God, at its fullest understanding, is beyond our imaginations, our language, our comprehension and intellect. But to arrogantly say "it's a mystery" and not to offer any of the insight which God himself has given to us as found in the Holy Scriptures, in the person of Jesus Christ, and the workings of the Holy Spirit, would be to negate our duty and joy in sharing the Good News of this God who loves us into being, who redeems us through love, and who welcomes us in love into the radiance of his eternal kingdom. Today should not be a difficult day for preachers since we are simply being asked to share with you, our brothers and sisters in Christ, the insights we have seen and understood; the Divine-human relationship within which we try to live and move and have our being. Of course, it is always possible we might overstretch ourselves and say something that is impossible for God and thus enter into heresy. Or we could also treat this as an academic exercise and bore you rigid with the ancient Councils and debates of the Early Church. But to do so would be to demean the life-giving essence of God who wants us to have, and gives us, life in all its fullness.

So where does one begin? What insights can be shared in this brief sermon? Let's start with Holy Scripture and the readings that have been provided. You might well ask why we only have 3 verses of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians but those verses contain much truth. Firstly, Paul's prayer "The Grace", as we have come to know, is one of the earliest codified accounts of the divine nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But more important is the dynamic that is expressed: grace, love, and communion. We glimpse that God lives in community – a unity of 3 persons yet one being, where love and grace are the values that bind God's very self together. God does not live in isolation but is bound together in love and grace, always connected.

In our Gospel reading for today we are again presented with this Trinitarian understanding of God for we are explicitly commanded to go and baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. To the best of my knowledge this is the first explicit reference to the triune God in the Gospels. But that isn't the exciting bit – at least not for me. Jesus says "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." That's the exciting bit. For just at that moment, after giving his great commission, Jesus ascends into heaven and physically

leaves the disciples. He has left them. He has left us. And yet he hasn't – for not only does he take all humanity and human experience into the heart of God by his return to the Father's side but he sends to us the promised gift of Godself through the Holy Spirit. In that one sentence we glimpse the interconnectedness of God and the connection we have with God. God will not leave us on our own because it is not in God's nature to be in isolation. As God's children, created and made in the image of God, we too are to be connected to each other whilst simultaneously connected to God. As an aside, I wonder whether that is part of the difficulty we are facing during lockdown, in that we have been created to live as connected beings not in isolation?

And I am sure there have been times in your lives and mine when you and I have felt alone and isolated; when God has felt distant. We are not alone. One can only imagine that one of the greatest pains for Jesus at his crucifixion was his sense of abandonment, of isolation, and disconnectedness from God's very self. And yet, even in the midst of all that, God was present. God is with us, even to the end of the age. For as St John puts it: *God is love, and those that live in love live in God and God lives in them.* That is the true nature of God and that is what we celebrate today, tomorrow, and every day. Yes, it is a mystery as love is a mystery but ... what a mystery. I will gladly spend all my days exploring the insights God has given as I want to share in that interconnectedness and divine love. The question is: do you want to, too?