

Trinity Sunday Rev, Vincent Gardner 30th June 2010

How many times have you had something happen to you, when you simply laughed and said: "God really has a sense of humour." I think we have all had that experience many times. I am convinced that God must have a wonderful sense of humour. After all, God is the source of all that is good: love, beauty, joy and laughter.

I think God must particularly enjoy Trinity Sunday as he watches preachers around the world trying to explain the great mystery which we celebrate today, the mystery of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – three persons -- one God – each person fully God, e.g. Egg, triangle, Trinity Colleges.

I remember in the college there was a course called "The Mystery of God". Our theology professor on the first day of trinity term explained to us that one of the mysteries we will study is the mystery of the Trinity. He went on to say that as future preachers he had some good news and some bad news for us. He said, "First the Bad News. You are going to have to preach about the mystery of the Trinity – three persons in one God – each fully God. The good news is that you only have to do it once a year on Trinity Sunday."

Well, I'm so persuaded that God has a great sense of humour that I bet God would appreciate hearing Bud Abbott explain the Trinity to Lou Costello if they were still alive. I think it would go something like this: (Lou Costello in italic print or [LC] and Bud Abbott in standard print or [BA]).

LC: *Bud, you're a very smart man and you know many things. I bet you know a lot about religion.*

BA: Well, yes Lou, I do. What would you like to know about religion?

LC: *Last weekend I went to the park and there was a church group having a picnic and they had a big sign the said "Holy Trinity Church". Well, Bud, I've driven around town and I have seen churches named St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Joseph, St. Thomas, but I never heard of this St. Trinity. Who is this St. Trinity?*

BA: Trinity is not a saint, Lou. Trinity is one of the ways that all Christians have come to understand God as revealed by Jesus Christ when he came to earth to live among us. The Trinity is God, One God – Three Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

LC: *That sure sounds like three gods to me.*

BA: No, Lou, one God, three persons – It's a mystery Lou.

LC: *Well, Bud, come to think of it, this is a very big world and universe and there are lots of people for God to watch. So probably the Father works the day shift, the Son the night shift and the Holy Spirit the graveyard shift.*

BA: No, Lou. No shifts. God's working all of the time.

LC: *O.K. so if God's working all the time, its still a very big world, so maybe God divides it up in thirds – a third for the Father, a third for the Son and a third for the Holy Spirit.*

BA: No, Lou, no thirds, no divisions, God is undivided. (Lou scratches his head for a minute and then says to Bud:) (Evangelicals have in the past divided God up into timelines: Father/Old testament, Jesus/New Testament, Holy Spirit/ Present time. Theologically inaccurate/ Trinity is the Trinity always.)

LC: *Well, Bud, let me ask it to you this way. I think God must be a baseball or cricket fan – after all the first words of the bible say "In the Big Inning".*

BA: No, Lou, it's "In the beginning" not "In the big inning".

LC: *Any way, Bud, you know how I like baseball. So let's say that God's team was playing a baseball game and God's team was up to bat. The Father hits a single – Who's on first?*

BA: God

LC: *The Father*

BA: That's right, Lou.

LC: *Then the Son comes up and hits a single. The Father goes to second base and the Son goes to first base. Who's on first?*

BA: God

LC: *I thought God was on second base.*

BA: That's right.

LC: *O.K. – then the Holy Spirit comes up and lays down a perfect bunt. The Father goes to third base, the Son goes to second base and the Holy Spirit beats out the throw – Safe at first. Who's on first?*

BA: God

LC: *I thought God was on second and third.*

BA: That's right Lou. God's on second and third. God is on first too. God is on all the bases.

LC: *I don't get it, Bud.*

Well, Bud can't explain it and Lou can't get it. And I can't explain the mystery of the Trinity and we can't get it. It is beyond our human comprehension to grasp the concept of the Trinity – three persons in one God, each fully God.

So, it would be appropriate for you to say, "Why bother? I have enough problems with things that I understand, let alone things that I don't understand."

As coincidence would have it, there are THREE good reasons why we should attempt to understand the mystery of the Trinity as best we can within our human limitations.

The first reason is that Jesus revealed the Trinity to us. The existence of the Father, of himself, the Son and the Holy Spirit, whom He and the Father sent forth upon the apostles. Jesus came and lived among us to teach us, to show us how to live and how to love, He worked miracles and died for our sins and rose from the dead to show us the way to eternal life. So whatever Jesus revealed to us, He revealed for a reason and it is important for us to pay attention to it and try to understand it as best we can.

Secondly, while we cannot grasp the idea of one God – three persons – each God, we can recognize that the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the perfect model of harmony and unity, a community of relationship, so perfectly intertwined that you cannot tell where one begins and the other ends. (The doctrine states that God is the Triune God, existing as three *persons*, or in the Greek *hypostases*, but one being.)

(Personhood in the Trinity does not match the common Western understanding of "person" as used in the English language—it does not imply an "*individual, self-actualized center of free will and conscious activity*." To the ancients, personhood "was in some sense individual, but always in community as well." Each *person* is understood as having the one identical essence or nature, not merely similar natures.) Since the beginning of the third century the doctrine of the Trinity has been stated as "*the one God exists in three Persons and one substance, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*." (Due to The Trinitarian Philosophy of the Cappadocian Fathers being re-evaluated in the in the 20th century: John Zizioulas, Jürgen Moltmann, Colin Gunton, Alan Torrance, Christian theology has had a large impact on secular thinkers, Carl Rogers psychotherapy, Paul Ricoeur literary theory, Carl Popper & Anthony Giddens economics, John Macmurray political philosophy who influenced Tony Blair).

The third and most important reason for us today is that in the first chapter of Genesis, humankind, you and I, are created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, since Jesus has revealed to us the essence of God as perfect unity, harmony, community and relationship, then the very core of our creation is a call to perfect harmony, community and relationship. This is a real challenge living in a society where individualism is promoted. Nonetheless we are called to expand our circle of relationship to include more and more people. The definition of person involves commitment to good relationships, to good stewardship of everything and to

When you stop to think of it, this is not so much a case of God's sense of humour, but more a case of God's great wisdom. What better day for us to celebrate the relationships in our lives than on the Trinity Sunday which is the perfect model of relationships. As I look around the church I see people in relationship to one another and I am honoured to be able to share in those relationships.

Another analogy: Even the baseball scenario of Abbott and Costello makes sense if you look at it from a certain perspective. After all, God has created a playing field for us to win, to win the only game worth winning, the eternal salvation of our soul and those with whom we have a relationship. If God is on first, second and third base, who does that leave to pick up the bat, step into the batters box and bring God home? That's right, you and me. God gives us the free will to say yes or no and gives us the grace and faith to decide to pick up that bat and step into that batter's box and start swinging. The beauty of it is that God loves us so much that as long as we are willing to stay in the batter's box and keeping swinging God will let us stay there as long as it takes. Sure there are times when we will swing and miss the ball and times when we hit a foul ball, but with God's help if we stand in there, eventually we will get hold of the right pitch and clear the bases and bring God fully home into our lives.

I close now with a prayer and a hope.

I pray that each and every day, whether upon rising in the morning or retiring at night or stopped at a traffic light, that we will each day ask ourselves this question; "Who's on first in my life?"

I hope that in each and every case we will say without batting an eye and without hesitation,

"God's on first!"

