*The LCA provides this sermon edited for lay-reading, with thanks to the original author.*

Sermon for Holy Trinity Sunday, Year A

# Text: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

*Editorial Note: This sermon references an image of Andrei Rublev's icon "The Trinity" which should be displayed at the appropriate point or used as an image for contemplation throughout the sermon. It is available at the following address:*

[*https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrej\_Rubl%C3%ABv\_001.jpg*](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AAndrej_Rubl%C3%ABv_001.jpg)

Peace be with you! Happy Trinity Sunday!

Thinking about the Trinity—that God is three and yet one at the same time— is one of the most difficult things we can do as Christians. But unless we try to know and understand this deep mystery of what God is like (at least as far as possible with our limited human minds) then we can never really come to know ourselves as people made in God’s image and likeness.

Now of course this isn’t simply a matter of trying to understand God with our finite human minds. The great St. Augustine came to realise that trying to fill his head with God was like trying to fill a hole in the sand with the ocean. No, today, Trinity Sunday, is most fundamentally about faith—about what we believe about the God who reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And the most fundamental, core element of our faith is that the God we proclaim and worship here is love. And since love is quite literally the most important thing in the world, then the only way we will ever be able to know and experience true love is by knowing and experiencing the true God. So today, Trinity Sunday, let’s focus on these two things:

1) what it means that God is love; and then

2) examining how our own lives and loves reflect God’s Trinitarian model of love

In the second reading from Romans, Paul writes, ***“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand”*** (Rom.5:1-2a). This ‘grace’ (charis) about which Paul writes is the undeserved love through which we have access to the heart of God.

Now we all know that love is not merely a feeling or an emotion, but an act – to will the good of the other. Thus, love requires another. It makes no sense to say “I am in love” unless there is an object to my love. And so, for God to be love he must somehow be its object, and that’s precisely how the Bible describes God. God the Father has perfect love from all eternity for his Son, the object of his love. ***“This is my beloved Son,”*** the Father says at Jesus’ baptism, and again on the Mount of Transfiguration. We confess this love between Father and Son in the Nicene Creed, when we say that Jesus is *“eternally begotten of the Father…begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.”*

Now, not only does the Father have perfect love for his Son, but the Son also loves his Father, and this love is the Holy Spirit, who eternally proceeds from this interchange between Father and Son, as we confess in the Creed: *“who proceeds from the Father and the Son; and who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified…”*

Now if we human beings are made in God’s image, then somehow, we also reflect this eternal love of Father, Son and Spirit. Consider the ideal human family. The husband loves his wife and the wife loves her husband. And in their deep love for each other, expressed in their becoming one flesh, a new eternal person, a baby, is brought into existence. We might say that through the sexual union of husband and wife the baby is ‘loved’ into being. And as they continue to love each other and the baby who is the product of their love, that child grows up in love and learns what it means to love in return.

This brings us to the second point: examining how our own lives and loves reflect God’s Trinitarian model. It’s at this point that we come to realise that we all fall short of this ideal; our sinful brokenness tarnishes the image of God’s love that ought to be reflected between husbands and wives, parents and children. Even Christian families are not exempt. It is a sad indictment of Christian families today – in whom, Paul says, God’s love has been poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit – that the divorce rate of Christians is almost identical to that of the national average.

But if our families are to be mirrors of God’s love – both to the next generation and to those outside the Church – then something must be done to restore the image of God which was impressed upon humanity in the beginning. Something must be done, but we can’t do it ourselves. Something must be done, and something was done, in the darkness, between noon and three, on that Friday we call good. Thus Paul continues in our reading, ***“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly….God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”*** (Rom.5:6,8).

Through Christ’s death on the cross, we see what is at the heart of true love: sacrifice. “My life for yours” is what we learn from God and what we are to reflect in our lives. Thus, in his Epistle of Love, the Apostle John writes: ***“God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.”*** (1 Jn.4:16).

[*Show Rublev icon*]

This beautiful icon of the Trinity was painted by a Russian monk by the name of Rublev. It depicts the three Persons of the Trinity sitting at a table. A dish of food lies on the table. But what is striking is that at the front of the table, there is a vacant space. That vacant space is meant for each of us, signifying God’s invitation to us to share in the life and love of the Holy Trinity. God excludes no one but invites everyone to come and sit at his table of love.

In the Holy Supper of our Lord’s body and blood, we are invited again to sit and sup at God’s table. It is a celebration meal – a party, if you will. And this party is not just down the street making up its mind when to come to us. God is even now, standing at the door of our hearts, with a bottle of wine in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other, knocking to bring the festivities in. He is our Father who cares deeply for us; He is our Brother, who willingly laid down his life for us; he is our Comforter, who dwells within us and guides us along the path of love and life.

May this grace, this love, and this fellowship of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be yours, today and always, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.