

Trinity Sunday

26 May 2024

Rev Dr Con Apokis

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8, John 3:1-17

Introducing the Theme

Quote: Spanish proverb *“Jealousy is thin because it bites but never eats”*.

I fear that I am about to annoy some of you - I not only love the Christian Trinitarian tradition and outlook - I believe in the God of Jesus through it.

Quote: Anonymous – as we continue with you this will be one of my go to themes – *“If you think you are leading but no one is following you are simply taking a walk”*.

Waiting for Putin's motorcade having gone to the wrong airport!

We visited Moscow in 2012. Our takeaway was that the Russian mafia runs an efficient country! Anyway, leaving, we travelled to the wrong airport - they have four. We needed to make a mad dash to the right one. It was a near thing – as en route we waited while the freeway was blocked to give way for a convoy of cars, which we were told was Putin in transit!



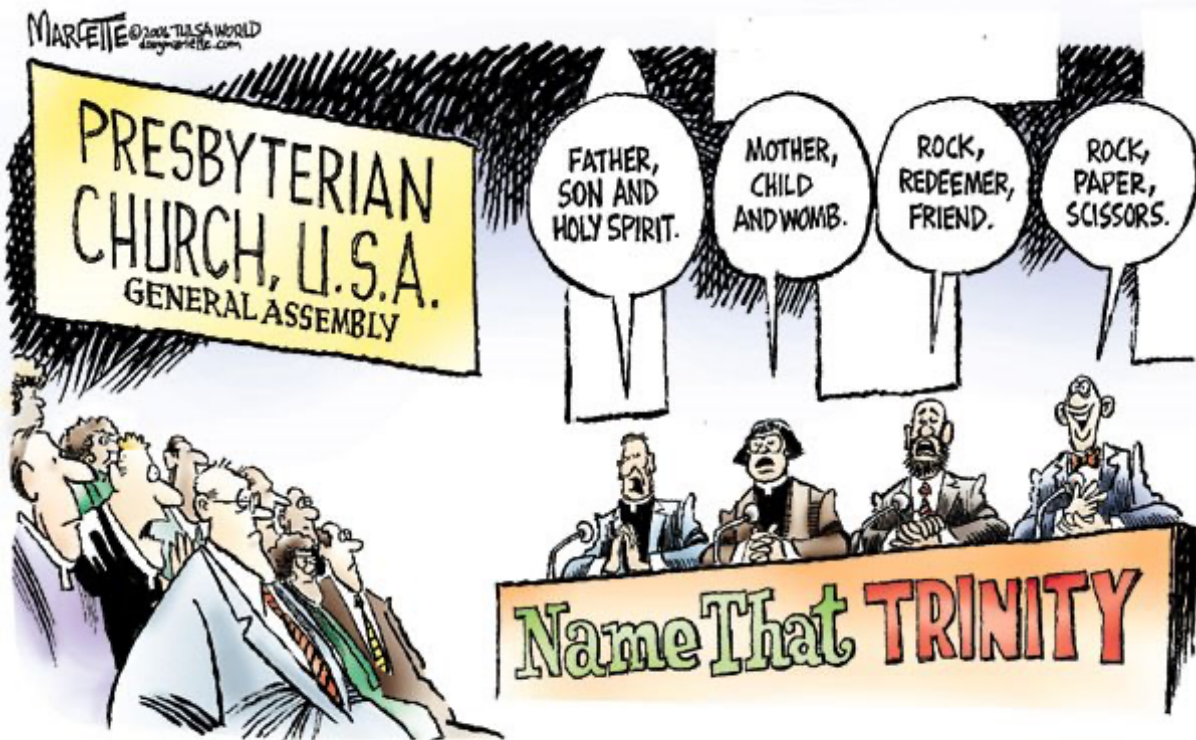
Visiting Russia the highlight was viewing Rublev's icon of the trinity. It is based on the three people who visited Abraham who signified the hospitality of God. As Christians this was depicted as the Trinity giving hospitality to us. God is looking at us and inviting us to join them. That is why we celebrate Trinity Sunday!

Quote: From **Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation 2004 (Richard Rohr)**.

“If the mystery of the Trinity is the template of all reality, what we have in the Trinitarian God is the perfect balance between union and differentiation, autonomy and mutuality, identity and community.”

Quote: From **Prophetic Dialogue 2011 (Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder)**
God's very nature is to be in dialogue: [the Trinity] in an eternal movement or flow of openness and receiving, a total giving and accepting, spilling over into creation and calling creation back into communion with Godself.

Jealousy is thin because it bites but never eats



"BAD NEWS—WE JUST GOT WORD THE EPISCOPALIANS ARE PRAYING FOR US!"

If you get caught up in the language then there is a danger we will miss the wood from the trees!

Quote: Is the Trinity too hard or that relevant?

"Some bemoan the price of education but the cost of ignorance is higher."

"Some bemoan the price of theology of the Trinity but the cost of ignorance is higher."

Illustration from **Charles Williams The Descent of the Dove** (BT 120:9 p. 468)

There are two types of religion: The rejection of images and the affirmation of images.

1. Religion that finds itself in the desert, in austerity, suspicious of the ornate, temples and rituals, the divine is best reflected by what is withheld.
2. Religion that is sacramental where nature and human culture are not barriers but bring the possibility of God.

Back when big TVs started to become popular, my Dad walked in and saw my first big TV and asked "is that TV bigger than mine?" As a second-generation Greek-Australian he wanted a TV bigger than my room can fit. May I suggest **God as Trinity is the God of Jesus as a TV bigger than the room can fit – seemingly both befuddling and intriguing?**

Are you a TV binge watcher? Watching a 6/12-part TV series in one sitting? An episode at a time is enough for me - anyway too often the story is padded out

in episodes 3 - 4. Binge watching covers a multitude of TV sins - TV shows are sometimes bigger than their story.

I'm not sure what books you are reading these days? Have you noticed that any current book seems to start at 400 pages? Lots of padding. **We have books bigger than their stories.** I remember in my younger days first reading giants of literature: Thomas Hardy, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc – true books as bigger than their stories but it all kind of made sense to plough through pages of painting details in an age prior to films & TV.

Currently I have been revisiting Graham Greene – which has story, pathos, insight and wisdom all in 180 pages. Lovely!

Quoting *The End of the Affair* (Graham Greene p 31) - on the anatomy of an affair based on his own experience of an affair as a committed Roman Catholic Christian.

"Jealousy, or so I have always believed, exists only with desire. The Old Testament writers were fond of the using the words 'a jealous God', and perhaps it was their rough and oblique way of expressing belief in the love of God for humanity." (sic).

Then *The End of the Affair* (Graham Greene p 43) - love as two sides of divine and human coin *"Anyone who loves is jealous."*

Now jealous has a disconcerting sense. God stalking us is not that appealing a notion. However surprisingly, the Trinity declares the desire of the God of Jesus in a transformative manner both in our understanding of God and God's jealous love of us. The Trinity is not so much theological who's on first, what's on second and I don't know on third - theological bingo words as in the cartoon. It is a portrayal of Jesus who shows us a God, who as Trinity, works together desiring the love of humanity - God as Trinity is the God of Jesus jealous for us!

Individual vs Group Jealousy

When I am jealous of you as a friend, partner, neighbour, celebrity, or any person we come across, it is hard not to see a version of envy and even worse a version of stalking. When a group of friends, family, club, community are jealous - it is more like an intervention - it is jealous not *of* but *for* you - it is an embrace and invitation, the best of human love - one that affirms, challenges and supports. So to divine love - *'a jealous God'* expressing belief in the *love of God for humanity*. Jesus invites us into divine love that invites and embraces individuals and communities.

The trinity is divine intervention - maybe a bridge to far for some,
- a God whose desire is to cross the road
- share life, death and hope among us
- for us and through us.

John3:1-17 is a version of this jealous intervention - **God in Jesus providing and furthering God's desire to love humanity.**

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'

The God of Jesus is the divine community undertaking an intervention. God is jealous for us to join the divine community - we symbolise that every time we share in communion – we are welcoming the divine intervention and joining the divine community in gracious appreciation and celebration - as all hospitality should be received. Inviting us to be embraced so that others may be embraced, to show love, show the way of love and to draw us into the embrace of God as Trinity. God as Trinity, the God who begets love, the God who meets us in love and the God who sends love, not just jealous love that we keep to ourselves but divine love that we are invited to join and share with others and offer to all to join in love, making our own divine icon of hospitality.

If I can be cheeky - a good morning tea will trump a Together@10 in bringing us together - the better morning tea the more Trinitarian Christian we are!

Conclusion

God's desire is to embrace us, inspire us and love us through Jesus and the Spirit in the circle of God's life now and forevermore. Amen.

Quoting The End of the Affair (Graham Greene p 121) a letter prior to death of lover.

"My dearest, I've got a headache and I feel like death. I wish I weren't as a horse. I don't want to live without you... But what's the good...? I believe there's a God – I believe, they could subdivide the Trinity into a dozen parts and I'd still believe...I've caught belief like a disease. I've fallen into belief like I fell in love. I've never loved before as I loved you, and I've never believed in anything before as I believe now. I'm sure. I've never been as sure before about anything. When you came in at the door with blood on your face, [after a V1 hit the place they were rendezvousing] I became sure. Once and for all. Even though I didn't

know it at the time. I fought belief for longer than I fought love, but I haven't any fight left."

In Newtonian theology vs quantum theology – until you observe Schrodinger's cat you are not sure if cat is alive or dead!

Not until you engage with God of Jesus do you know whether God is alive or dead!

God & the world – the hierarchical emphasis on creation is not what God is. The world is somehow beneath God. The problem of salvation is the chasm. Jesus says that the problem of salvation is the disconnect with God.

The Trinity is the God of Jesus as a TV bigger than the room can fit!