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Dear Friends,

**....”Go and make disciples, baptising them  
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**

What a relief, it's Trinity Sunday tomorrow and I won't have to clamber up the pulpit steps and try and help you (and me!) make sense of this three in one yet one in three, one person God. For many years I have thanked God for curates and craftily handed them this Sunday as a privileged preaching slot in the clergy rota! I have sat back and enjoyed listening as they try to unravel the doctrine of an omniscient, omnipotent God who is both far off yet very near, unknowable yet known in the smallest moments of our lives.



Russian Icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrey Rublev

Years ago on Trinity Sunday congregations would get up on their feet and affirm their faith in the words of The Creed according to Athanasius. Several pages later they would sit down in total confusion! Why have theologians tried to make the Christian faith so complicated? Safely shut away in church halls or hidden away in the Vicar's Vestry or kitchen generations of Sunday School teachers have drawn triangles or clover leaves and tried to convince children that the one God whom Christians worship is also three persons. Not too many children I know have fallen in love with Jesus through our faltering attempts to explain church doctrine although many have come to know and love Jesus through the listening to wonderful bible stories.

Matthew's risen Lord tells his friends to, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in Corinth" saying, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" The words, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" and "..... the blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit" are uttered by priests in churches around the world each Sunday. Are we simply expressing our longing that the overflowing love, that we call God's, found and seen in a human life, will come to make a home in you and me? And we are being asked to go and share with others a belief that there is a God or a love whose creative purpose runs through all creation. When I baptise an infant I pray that one day he or she will not just believe in but have a relationship with a man called Jesus. I pray that the infant will one day understand that it was the power of love that led Jesus to the cross, it was the power of love that held him there and it is that same love that draws us into relationship with others today. God is love and this endless or eternal love has the power to create, sustain and save us.

Each Sunday after the sermon is preached, we stand to affirm our faith, thus correcting any errors or inadvertent priestly heresies! We are articulating creedal statements written many hundreds of years ago when the early church was trying to agree what made an individual a "real" Christian. The early theological battles mostly focused on two questions, "was Jesus just a good man or was this man divine?" Creeds agreed at Nicaea in the year 321 and tweaked at Constantinople in 381 were crafted to keep the "heretics" out. No wonder the church's language of doctrine and even liturgy seems to come from another world. Once upon a time adults, and even children, were quite prepared to refer to themselves as "miserable sinners" and feel grateful when their sins were absolved each Sunday. Today we live in another context. Young people know nothing of sinfulness: they think about making good choices, making mistakes and saying sorry. Words can be strangely similar yet utterly different! Look at the bemused faces of godparents at a baptism service and you will know just what I mean.

Recently, Francis Spufford in his book "*Unapologetic, Why despite everything, Christianity can still make surprising emotional sense*" spoke of the human need for faith. Spufford, like William Barclay many years ago, speaks the language of ordinary people once called "the common man". Only too aware of his own shortcomings writes about the oh so human HPTFTU (High Propensity to F

things up). Spufford expresses his belief that we all desperately need a saviour and reminds us that we all have that life-threatening propensity to break good intentions, promises and relationships. We all have the remarkable capacity to harm both ourselves and those we most love. Christians claim that in Jesus we've seen a love that can make all things new. We also make the daring claim that this love has been at work in creation since the world began and we make the claim that this is the love that binds us together and to our maker.

It doesn't surprise me that, for the Christian church, on-line worship or service attendance has been significantly higher than "normal" church attendance. Clergy leading worship or offering a thought for the day are being viewed by hundreds, sometimes thousands of people on Facebook and YouTube. Each year Vicars and Church Wardens submit Diocesan returns reporting average weekly attendance. If churches discover numbers have quadrupled on-line, will some suggest keeping their doors closed? Here in Radyr I suspect I may still be recording services for the sick and housebound and Zooming with family friends and colleagues even when church worship resumes.

Yesterday's newspaper was filled with the usual Covid stories, but also a front page headline suggested the "killer" of little Madeleine McCann may have been found? The story of a gorgeous white middle class child abducted from a beach resort filled our hearts with fear many years ago and since then has cost the police (and presumably the UK taxpayer) some £12 million. In the wake of the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis I can't help wondering whether a missing black child from a council estate in London or a Butlins Holiday Camp would have created the same response. I'm afraid I doubt it.

Even if Madeleine was abducted, abused and killed by the child sex offender Christian Bruckner – hard as it is to believe or write – Christians believe that Bruckner is not beyond God's redeeming love. Floyd may have made some mistakes in his life but he should not have been murdered by officers whose task it was to bring peace and order to the streets. Christians believe that neither Floyd nor the four officers accused of killing him are beyond God's redeeming love. Why do I say this ahead of Trinity Sunday? Am I just being provocative? No. When we stand to recite the Nicene creed saying "We believe in One God Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Lord Jesus Christ..." we are telling ourselves and each other that we believe in a God who is "omnipotent", that is almighty. We believe in the power of love, a love that creates, redeems and sustains all life. Whilst we may not be abusers or murderer, like it or not we are "miserable sinners" and we've all made a plethora of mistakes from which if we choose we could turn and be healed.

Black lives do matter and white lives matter too. God, who is love, sees no distinction. We are one and we are all equal. Let's pray that the One God known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit will dance among our lives this week filling us with the capacity to love even those we find it hardest to like.

Yours in the love of Christ,

**Vicki**

**X**

These photos come from The Church of All Nations (also known as The Basilica of the Agony) on the Mount of Olives, beside Gethsemane in Jerusalem. The Church makes the point powerfully through exhibiting The Lord's Prayer in every known language that we are ALL God's children and equal in His eyes.

