



St Marylebone  
Parish Church

## Trinity Sunday 2020 8.30 am

*Revelation 4.1-end & John 3.1-15 (Sermon)*

*In the name of the ever-blessed Trinity, Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Over my more than 30 years as a priest, I have enjoyed the privilege of being invited into the homes of thousands of people.

Some homes have been extremely humble, whilst others have included crumbling mediaeval castles and lavish 19<sup>th</sup> century palaces.

Often those visits have been to discuss a baptism or a wedding or a funeral, sometimes just to enjoy a cup of tea or to be entertained to a meal.

Over the long weeks of lockdown, I have still been visiting other people's homes - lavish and humble, spacious and cramped, rich and poor - and all courtesy of the Zoom video conference call.

I have been enjoying ticking off people's wall colourings from Dead Salmon to Elephant's Breath on a Farrow and Ball paint

chart, and matching furniture to the latest John Lewis catalogue; I have enjoyed reading the titles of books on the shelves of bookcases - or seeing an unidentified hand produce a cup of tea or coffee from Zoom Stage Left! Nobody - yet - I am pleased to report, has to exit pursued by bear!

The first Queen Elizabeth may have remarked that she did not seek windows into other men's souls, but then she never had to engage in a Zoom Video Conference Call!

However intriguing or enticing these momentary glimpses into other people's lives might be, in a few minutes or - in the worst cases - a few hours - the people and places they inhabit are gone.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity, so central to Christian faith and life, is an attempt to draw out and draw together the implications of the glimpses of God humanity has captured down through the centuries, through the everyday, sometimes all-too human, experiences of Patriarchs and Prophets, Judges and, of course, the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - the One who gives us the most complete glimpse of God's being.

On this day, when we celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity, we know that the doctrines we have created through long centuries are, at very best, no more than wholly inadequate. They are poor, weak inferences and constructs drawn from those all-too-fleeting glimpses of God; no more than fumbling

human best-attempts to capture something of the lived experience of the God who is over us, and with us and in us.

These glimpses of God, provide us, of course, with no more than the basic raw material from which we have to craft a doctrine, a wordscape, of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Intriguing, enticing, disturbing as they might be; inadequate, poor and error-filled as they are, these glimpses are, nevertheless all we have to go on; the things recorded and reflected upon by generations of women and men throughout history.

Today's reading from St John's Gospel, the story of the Jewish elder who comes to Jesus by night, reminds us that, no matter what we have learned from a book, or gleaned whilst reflecting on Scripture, or glimpsed in the lives of others, there is no substitute for actually getting involved in the very life of the Holy Trinity, for throwing oneself in at the deep end and learning to swim in tide of God's dynamic love and life.

*“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”*, Jesus tells Nicodemus.

No doctrine or formulation, however polished, will make someone believe in God. It is only by taking the plunge and diving headfirst, with nothing held back, into loving, life-giving relationship with God; handing oneself over completely to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, that will do that. This Jesus message, invitation, to Nicodemus - and it is

his message and invitation to us, the Zoom Generation, 2000 years later.

The Holy Trinity is not a doctrine; God is not a set of scholastic conundrums, however well explained, God is relationship, God is love, God is all that there was, and is and all that there ever shall be when the all the Zoom Video Conferences will have come to an end. Amen.