

# FR ALAN'S REFLECTION

## MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Trinity. The Trinity is a mystery to us and will always remain so Thomas Aquinas put it well when he said, 'The most we can know about God during our present life is that he transcends everything that we can conceive of him.' However, there is nothing wrong with using analogies. Analogies are useful to assist us in both our appreciation of the Trinity and its implications for our lives.

Each Sunday we recite together the Nicene Creed. Its origin comes from when this formula was agreed upon in the city of Nicaea in 325AD. It was not written based on a series of abstract theories. It was based on the experience of the Early Church from the time of Jesus about the life, work, and mission of Jesus Christ and his promise to send the Holy Spirit after he returned to the Father. The early Christians around the time of Jesus were all Jewish. In contrast to the Greeks and the Romans, who believed in many Gods, the early Jewish Christian Community believed in only one God. The early apostles like Peter, John and Mary Magdalene all believed in one God too but with a difference from most of their Jewish contemporaries. They grew in understanding that whilst God was one, he was also God with an inner life at work. Within God there was a life of community and love. An example of this was the way Jesus addressed his Father as Abba. This was a much less formal term than Father. It speaks of a close intimate relationship based on deep love. As the Early Christian community grew to accept both non-Jews as well as Jews into their community, baptism into the life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, became the point of entry. Once baptized they could all address God as Abba as Jesus had done.

Around 400AD St Augustine wrote a text called the De Trinitate where he presents an analogy of the Trinity. God is three: mind (Father), self-knowledge (Son) and self-love (Spirit). The one mind does not split into three but rather the mind subsists in three modalities or relations. This means that God is one but subsists in a play of relationships, of give and take, of breathing in and breathing out. Whilst this may sound abstract, this is something we do ourselves on some level. An example is where through either a series a conversations with a close friend, a counsellor, or a spiritual director we come to know ourselves better and this in turn leads to greater self-love. We remain as one but there is an inner life at work within us. This is a natural occurrence as we are all made in the image and likeness of God.

If we reflect upon the Trinity for long enough, we come to understand its implications for our lives. God as a community of persons of life and love calls us to do the same in our lives in terms of both our relationship with God and with one another. The first words we say in the Creed on a Sunday is 'I believe...' This comes from the Latin Credo which essentially means I give my heart. This means the words I believe is something that I not only profess

with my lips but is also accompanied by concrete acts of love for both God and other people. In today's Gospel we hear the words from Jesus, 'God so loved the world that he sent his only Son, so that all who believe may have eternal life.' These words remind us of God's total self-giving to us. As people of faith made in God's image, our role is to be an image of God's love to the world. We do that when we give our hearts completely to God and to one another. In our Second Reading today St Paul reminds us that this means we are to constantly strive for perfection by living in unity and peace and being willing to help one another.