

St Olave, Trinity Sunday Sermon, Malcolm Grundy

On this Sunday I mark 50 years since I was ordained priest. I am going to try and describe these years by looking at aspects of the Trinity. One of the people I have worked with over the years is John Dennis, Bishop of Knaresborough and then St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. In one of his final recorded interviews he said that in his retirement he had taken up woodcarving. On one occasion had tried to carve three equal interlocking circles, the symbol of the Trinity, from one block of wood - but it would not let him - the grained and knotted piece of wood insisted on taking its own shape.



No life goes exactly as we plan. Some parts are joyful while others are challenging. In Sheffield I worked with Bishop Stewart Cross. His hymn, 'Father Lord of all creation', gives me a good template for my ministry over these 50 years.

Our God is 'Lord of all creation', and we give thanks for this fragile but wonderful world. For my first 11 years, I was an Industrial Chaplain. First in the Doncaster Coalfield and at Doncaster's British Rail 'Plant' Works. Then in Sheffield to join and later lead the Industrial Mission team.

To be underground in a coal mine or to observe the power of an electric arc furnace and to see molten metal being poured and then rolled or forged is to sense the power of creation. To be alongside those making redundancies and closing factories and mines was to see another side. We talked long and often about how what we do in our work can be offered to this Creator God.

Jesus Christ was and is 'the Man for others'. My second Trinitarian phase of ministerial life was in creating education programmes for the five Episcopal Areas just established in the London Diocese. I learned about teamwork and how a complex diocese works. I joined learning networks across mainland Europe and made lifelong friendships not least in the Church of Sweden. Together we explored the great Bonhoeffer question - 'who is Jesus Christ for me today'.

The Holy Spirit, 'the wind and flame of Pentecost' gives new life to the Church. My third Trinitarian sector of ministry has been to help bring a spirit of renewal within our Church of England, always with ecumenical colleagues, My first 'coal face' here was to set up a Team Ministry in Huntingdon in the Diocese of Ely - with a team to grow four congregations and at the same time establish and teach the adult education 'Focus in the Fens' course, raise funds

for the Church Urban Fund and enjoy the enormous privilege of being a Canon at Ely Cathedral.

A little later, to my total surprise, I had one of those letters that just a few clergy get - would I like to be Archdeacon of Craven in the Yorkshire Dales. I thought, after industrial South Yorkshire, London and a GLC Overspill town had the church gone mad - or was the Holy Spirit being more than a little disturbing?

I do not need to tell you anything about the good and bad sides of being an archdeacon! Arch-Deacon - the chief servant in a diocese I will however say that it is a privileged position, if you are any good at it you are closer to the parishes than anyone else in a diocese. With hard-learned experience and some intuition you can share countless ways of bringing God's spirit of new life to clergy and congregations.

The idea of Trinity means that we should each try to 'join up' our different experiences of God in our working as well as our private life. I have tried to do this in my possibly too many books and in my final job setting up a leadership foundation for senior clergy. Asking such questions as, 'Who guards the guards' was not always an easy or popular place to be and rattled quite a few cages. Fortunately, in my first years of retirement York St John University encouraged me to do more research. So, pursuing these questions eventually made me Dr Malcolm!

I began with a story about Bishop John Dennis - but I only told you half of it - I have left to the end what he said about a piece of wood, like the one from which he carved the Trinity rings. He said, 'You have to look at a piece of wood, feel it and get to know it - then it will tell you what it wants you to do with it'. Something similar has been true for me of getting to know the Trinity in these 50 years of ministry!