

Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6 vv 1-8, Romans 8 vv 12-17, John 3 vv 1-17

I promised you a sermon on *ανωγωγη* *anagogy*. It is an ugly word with a beautiful meaning. *Anagogy* is the process of God leading us up into Himself.

In one sense you can say quite a lot about God. Look at the wonders of the Universe. They are the creation of God and they tell us something about the wonder of their Creator. Use your own mind. Contemplate the mystery of God. Meditate prayerfully and thoughtfully. You learn something of the mystery of God. Read the works of other people – spiritual guides and philosophers, including non-Christians because God has made Himself known to sincere seekers after the truth in many different ways. Read the Bible, that collection of uniquely inspired books through which God has made Himself known to Jews, Christians and the world.

Experience God in private prayer. Experience Him in public worship Experience Him in the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the other Sacraments.

In a sense we can know quite a bit about God both in terms of head knowledge, the facts we could enumerate, and of heart knowledge, that personal knowledge we have of God as we might have of another human being as Father, friend, even lover.

Today is Trinity Sunday. God the Father is revealed, He is apparent both in nature and revelation. Supremely He makes Himself known through God the Son – Jesus, both the second person of the Holy Trinity and the child of Mary – and the Holy Spirit, God with us, God within us and God among us. With Jesus we know God as *Abba, Father*, because God's Spirit, the Spirit of the Risen Christ resides in our hearts.

Yet, in another sense, we do not really know God at all. Everything we think we know of God is bound to be inadequate. We think we have grasped something of the truth, but then we realise. God is infinitely more. He is the Creator of the Universe but He is infinitely more than that. He is the One we talk to in prayer and He is infinitely more than that. He is present with us in public worship but He is infinitely more than that. He is with us in the pages of the Bible and He is infinitely more than that.

Now this is where it gets hard. What we know of God in Jesus falls so far short of the reality that the most profound spiritual guides say that it is as if we knew nothing. Likewise, what the Holy Spirit reveals to us is such a small portion of the immensity of God that is as if we knew nothing.

We rightly think of God as Father, Judge, Creator, as good, just, merciful, yet these words are such a pale reflection of God's light, a candle lit from the sun, that their light is totally swallowed up in His brilliance. If God's worth is infinite, our worship is insignificant. Human words, even good words, reflect the limitations of our thought. Our thoughts are so limited with regard to God, that our words must be wrong, that they are as nothing.

This is the hard part, but there is relief – anagogy. God is drawing us onwards and upwards. He is drawing us up into Himself. The initiative is His. The power is His. It is by His grace that we are saved. As we are drawn into Him, it becomes increasingly clear that God is in everything and everything is in Him. He truly is Father, Judge, Creator, good, just, merciful. He epitomises these things. He epitomises everything. All things find their fulfilment in Him.

Which brings us to the mystery of the Word made flesh. In Jesus the divine nature and human nature are united in one person. Humanity is caught up into Deity. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are redeemed; we are saved; we are restored in God's image; we come into our inheritance as the children of God. Our humanity is caught up in His divinity. We become one with Him and He with us.

Today I am preaching on the hard Greek word anagogy. Nineteen years ago, you may remember, I preached on another hard Greek word - θεοποιησις theopoiesis. It means making human beings divine and it is part of the same process as anagogy. Through the shedding of Christ's Blood, everything that divides us from God is washed away. We are one with Him and He with us. We are led up into the fullness of God. We are made divine.

In Jesus, the human and the divine nature meet. In Christ, the human and the divine nature meet in us. We have God's Holy Spirit.

Please grant me one more hard Greek word - περιχορησις perichoresis. This is a dance around. Can you think of the three persons of the Holy Trinity as united in an eternal dance of love? They hold hands, change places, cross in and out of one another, perpetually together, eternally one in infinite love and bliss. Now think of us caught up in this perichoresis, this eternal dance of the Holy Trinity. Led up into God by God, anagogy, transformed into His Nature, theopoiesis, we are caught up into that eternal unity of the Holy Trinity, perichoresis.

How can this be? Well it is all of God. He leads us up into Himself, but I am sure that we have to co-operate. He has given us free will to choose Him or reject Him. Will we let Him take us by the hand? Will we let Him lead us up into Himself? As St Paul says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."