

Why is the Trinity important as a starting place? By Ian Mobsby

Where we start in our Christian faith is key to our understanding of the significance of Jesus, God and our place in the purposes of God. We do this so subconsciously that often we forget that we even do this, but what we do recognise is that Christians have very differing values about the faith and what 'Church' as the Body of Christ is all about.

If you are a Conservative Evangelical Christian, then you understand the significance of Jesus through the eyes or rather the writings of St Paul. You will spend a lot of time exploring the depth of Paul's faith in Jesus. The themes of redemption from sin, salvation from slavery, personal piety and commitment to not be polluted by the world's brokenness will be a key focus. Faith is then strongly about you, and about Jesus being the example of the type of life we should live. Redemptive theology is a key focus.

If you are radical liberal, then you will approach the significance of Jesus through the Gospels and the old testament that talk about restorative justice. You see Jesus as challenging the powers, as the link between 'living for the kingdom' in political terms, and living out a life that seeks to stand up for the poor and excluded. However, there is not much about spiritual piety and the love of God for all peoples, rich and poor. Incarnational theology is a key focus.

If you are a more Conservative Catholic, then you will start with creation, and the idea of Israel as a people commencing a tradition, a way of ordering the world, drawing on natural morality, as the focus. That the Christian Church, follows the ways handed down from the Hebrews as the Church becomes the New Israel, so that Priesthood becomes an important sense of received tradition. Patristic Theology becomes a key focus.

However, in all these three above, people take positions, that their particular perspective of the significance of Jesus is the important focus, and in more extreme expressions, the only true expression.

I want to argue, that the more mature position, a middle way, a way of the broad church, a more contemporary understanding saying that aspects of all these three positions of the significance of Jesus are true, and that we are called to live with the complexity of holding different aspects of these seemingly opposing 'truths' at the same time.

If you start with the Trinity, then it puts the significance of Jesus into context. Yes Jesus is about redemption from our brokenness but always in the context of Grace and inclusion as expressed most fully in the Trinity. Yes it is about radical justice and inclusion, but as modelled in the fullest in the Trinity that also welcomes the rich and 'evil' to refind their humanity and salvation, and Yes it is about Priesthood and received tradition, but also drawing on scripture and reason, as lived out in the expression of the wisdom tradition and ministry of the Holy Spirit as expressed in the Trinity.

If we hold centrally onto the Trinity as a starting place, then we are less likely to be blinkered and therefore less likely to be polemical about over promoting certain attributes of God and God's own sayings. Life then is more grey than black and white, and fundamentally complex when it comes to people and right action.

In this way our ministry maintains a focus on love, and not on judgement, and we can then be Christians with people we possibly dislike and disagree with.

One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church – can only be fully realised if we start with the Trinity.