

TRINITY Year B

One of life's great joys is to watch little children as they begin to explore the world on their own. We can see their eyes gradually open to the wonders around them. They are in to everything, experimenting with touch and taste, and learning to use all their senses. It is a challenging time for parents, especially when they learn to speak and ask the what, the why and the how. Handling their difficult questions is a great skill. It is a case of trying to satisfy their little minds for the time being, knowing that there is so much more to learn and that even then they and we may never grasp the mystery.

So how do we deal with questions about things of which we are not really sure ? For example, I may understand a little about jet engines and aerodynamics, but I still marvel that a huge plane manages to take off so gracefully... and what keeps it "up there" anyway ?

Just like children, we adults are surrounded by a wonderful and mysterious world. Although we may reckon ourselves wise in the ways of the world, we are still very much aware of our inability to make complete sense of it all. Often we can give no clear answer, especially to the question "why?" In such moments it is good to just marvel at the mystery and rejoice in the fact that it is.

The word "mystery" has a rich and deep Christian significance. It is a word that we use, not to avoid thinking about the 'big issues' of faith, but to help us explore our very limited understanding of the nature of God.

I could probably spend another half hour trying to explain a theological and very wordy description of the nature of God. But at the end of it all you would probably be bored to snoring and none the wiser. I will be a much more effective witness (and probably be a whole lot more convincing) if I try to tell you how I **feel** about God. And how I feel about God comes from what I've learned from Jesus who used images and stories to describe his God and Father. I find myself coming back to the extraordinary image of the Father figure in the story of the prodigal son – [*short explanation... the father running down the road, embracing his wayward and very human son, unconditionally welcoming and holding him etc.*]

Today's second reading reminds us that we are not God's slaves living in fear – as the prodigal son wanted to believe. We are children of God, heirs as well. We have been granted the privilege of inheriting the glory of God, we have been given the right to belong. God loves us and that's all that matters. All God expects is that we reciprocate in our love for one another. If God is mystery and we are all made in the image and likeness of God, it should come as no shock to realise that it takes a lifetime to work out and understand each other. We know that we learn best about people when we really **want** to know them for ourselves, refusing to be satisfied with second-hand accounts. Our love for people prompts us to know them better; our love for God urges us to deepen our understanding of God.

Our journey towards God and towards each other is made along the same road. And when we journey that road in love and respect, the way we travel assures us of our destination. That is the Gospel.