

Dear Friends,

Mark 1: 1-11

The Lord our God the Lord is one. That's a statement from early in the Bible, which is used in Jewish worship twice a day. Christians also believe that there is one God, but we add that this one God is known in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three persons within the one God relate to each other. Examples of this are, the voice of the Father speaking to the Son; the Son praying to the Father; Jesus promising that the Father will send the Spirit; Jesus breathing out the Spirit upon his friends. The three relate to each other, but there are not three Gods but one.

How can God be one and yet three at the same time? It might be entertaining to watch me tying myself in knots trying to explain, but in the end I'm not sure it would be very enlightening. I wonder if this way of understanding God came out of the experience of the first Christians. They were unshakable in their conviction that there was only one God, not a multitude of gods. Then they met Jesus. They watched what he did and heard what he said. They became convinced that they were encountering God in Jesus and that it was therefore right to worship him. Then, they experienced the Holy Spirit. They were certain that the Spirit was active in exactly the way that Jesus was and therefore it was right to see the Spirit also as God. And yet, they continued to believe not in many gods but in one God. Their belief became known as the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Trinity shows us that in the very heart of God there is relationship. We can see this in the story of the baptism of Jesus, a story I'm going to stay with for a few more of my letters. In this story the three persons of the Trinity have a relationship of love with one another. The Holy Spirit moves towards Jesus like a bird in flight, and then remains on Jesus. Jesus himself is open to the Spirit, he receives the Spirit and allows himself to be moved by the Spirit. Jesus hears the voice of God the Father telling him that he is his beloved child in whom he is well pleased.

So, within the heart of God there is this relationship of love. What is astonishing and wonderful is that you are invited to enter into and become part of this relationship. In the next two or three letters I'd like to look at three elements of this invitation.

To join with the Spirit in moving towards Jesus  
To join with Jesus in being open to the Spirit  
To join with Jesus in hearing the voice of God

God bless you,

Tony