

## **‘The Simplicity of God’ - A Homily for Trinity VI**

*Luke 11.1-13*

According to much of the history of the Christian tradition, God has been described as “simple”. Slightly ironically, what it means to describe God as simple is slightly complicated. But, basically, it means that God, unlike us, doesn’t have parts.

For example, as I stand here today, I have a body made up of lots of different parts. But, I might not always have those parts. I currently have blond hair, but that might not always be the case. To be honest, the way things are going, I might not always have hair at all... So, I might lose something that I have. But, I might also gain something new. For instance, I might learn a new skill. Playing the organ, or arranging flowers, or learning to bake delicious cakes, or any of the various and amazing things that those of you here today can do.

As someone who can gain and lose things, my life is shaped by the ways in which I change and the things that I need. I’m complex. But God isn’t like this. God is simple. And this is important, because it means that there’s a fullness to God’s life. There isn’t anything lacking in God.

We believe, as the creed remind us, in one God, a God who is whole and complete. But, of course, we also believe that this one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now, believing that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit isn’t a kind of qualification of the idea that God has no parts. It’s actually a kind of intensification of the idea. To believe in one God who is three persons is to believe that God’s life is so complete, so full, that it expresses itself as the giving and receiving of love.

Now, you might reasonably be wondering why I’m telling you all this. What difference does it make to you and to me that God is this fullness of life that is found in the sharing and receiving of Godself?

Well, in today’s Gospel, Jesus is asked by his disciples how they should pray. And Jesus gives them a form of words which has developed into what we call the Lord’s prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven... Now, what's remarkable about this is that, in teaching his disciples how to pray, Jesus invites his disciples to address God as Father. Jesus invites them – just as he also invites us – to enter into that life that I have just been talking about, that life that is so fully abundant that it just is an outpouring of love.

Of course, our experience of the world is not one of complete abundance, love, and freedom from need. Ours is a world bogged down in sin. Ours is a world in which we find ourselves passionately pleading for the end to suffering, for peace to reign, for hunger and sexism and racism and all discrimination to cease, for all of us to know ourselves as truly loved and loveable.

In the second half of today's Gospel, Jesus addresses this kind of pleading, inviting us to be persistent in prayer. Ask, Jesus tells us, and it will be given to you. I have to confess that I'm not totally sure how to make sense of what Jesus says here. If nothing else, it just doesn't seem to be true. All of us, I'm sure, have sometimes (maybe regularly) found ourselves frustrated in prayer – desperately praying for things that just don't come true.

But, I think it makes all the difference to know that, when we pray, we enter into the fullness of God's life. Because this reminds us that, while the world is not yet as it should be, all of creation is being gathered up into the perfection of God's life. And, while we might not know why our prayers sometimes seem to go unanswered, we can go on in the hope that the fullness that is God's life is what we too will one day have a share in for ourselves.

When we finish praying, we usually end by saying 'amen'. To say amen is precisely this kind of act of hope. It is an expression of trust in God's faithfulness, in God's stability and steadfastness, in God's simplicity. To say amen is to bind ourselves to God's purposes and promises.

When we say amen, we acknowledge and witness to God's Amen, which, in Revelation, is described as 'the beginning of God's creation'. And we can believe that, in the end, all shall be well, because God's amen, this definitive "yes", is who God is. After all, to say that God is simple – to say that God is complete – is to say that there is only Yes, only

amen, in God. It's this creative, joyful amen that Jesus invites us to share in by inviting us to address God as Father. As St Paul reminds us, 'in [Jesus] it is always Yes. For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes'. For this reason, it is through him that we say the 'Amen'".

And as we learn to pray, as we learn to say Amen, we must learn to act a little less thoughtlessly, a little less inattentively. And we must learn to speak a little less ignorantly, less dishonestly. After all, amen isn't just something we say, but is a way of life that we commit ourselves to. Learning to say amen more faithfully is about learning to live more faithfully, to work to undo all that causes harm, and to dismantle all those systems of oppression that hold people back from fullness of life, and to bring healing and repair to all that has been broken.

For we are called not just to receive the fullness of God's life, but to share it with others. Amen.