

Something of the mystery of God pertains to us, creatures made in God's image, all different and yet called to be one, called and yet still God's work, not left alone to work this unity for ourselves but to discover instead that God is at work in us always drawing us into the mystery of God's love, or better, the love that is God as Trinity: a mystery or movement we are made for, from which we come, in which we live and to which we go. I was fortunate to attend the blessing of a marriage yesterday between a Muslim and a Christian and the readings, as you might expect, were all on the theme of love including an excerpt from 'Captain Corelli's Mandolin' by Louis de Bernières:

'Those that truly love have roots that grow towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossoms have fallen from their branches, they find that they are one tree and not two.'

This reminded me of a tree we have in our inner courtyard here in Turvey which one would never know was originally two trees growing a short distance apart in gaps in the old stone wall that used to run across the garden before we demolished it to build an extension. We left the trees though as a centrepiece – a few centimetres each in girth and perhaps three metres high. That was almost thirty years ago. And now it's grown into one tree which dominates the yard some 60 centimetres in girth and 15 metres high, providing very welcome shade in our hot summers and witnessing many an open-air meal during COVID. It's a Field Maple – unusual in gardens but found in the wild throughout Europe and as far as Northern Persia and North Africa, leaf unfolds pinkish and even bright red in hedges, soon bright green and then dark. Autumn colour rich gold over a long period some red and some later purple. That's from a field guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe and I would like to suggest that what we hear in the Bible is also in the nature of a Field Guide, to God's love, to that story of God drawing us into the mystery of God as love, of God as Trinity- written also not firstly from theory but from experience, from what people have seen and known, but it's often an experience of disunity as much as unity, and we also heard a reading from the Qur'an which goes some way to explain this

"If God had willed He would have made you one community, But His will is to test you with what He has given each of you. So race one another in doing good. To God you will all return. "

The whole mystery of difference is here but God still turns it to good – not without suffering and not without God's help, not that is without that Trinitarian pattern that God, in a sense, re-creates in us – the work of the Spirit drawing us into the love of Father and Son. The mother of the bride summed this up in a beautiful prayer:

*" And despite how simple it may sound,
I pray that his grace will abound
And motivate everything you do:
And may the fullness of His love be shared through you.*

This is the mystery of the Trinity brought home to us for the nature of love is always outgoing, never for itself only – and this is God to us as Father, Son and Spirit. One God despite all appearances to the contrary – one in love as we are, sharing a common beginning and a common end. And who knows but those two trees we found in our garden when we first came to Turvey were already one, growing out from a common rootstock but called to grow together in the short life we have to be a sign of this original unity, this original image we all bear, and of our common goal in God. Called then even in our difference to grow into one and to provide joy and shade for others.