

# 40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

## DAY 23 – The Church reveals the Trinity

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*  
2 Corinthians 13:14

Trinitarian theology is, to put it mildly, difficult. The problem with the doctrine of the Trinity is not the truth of the doctrine, but how people try to come at it. These devotions over the past few days have actually put us in a good place to understand the Trinity. So, I hope you kept up with the story so far. The one sentence take-away is this, “We only truly know the world and the church by knowing who God is.” You’re probably thinking, “Well, that would have saved us some headaches.”

The doctrine of the Trinity was slowly developed over the first 300 years of the church as the only way it was possible to truly understand God the Father and how He is related to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And it comes first from understanding what is called, “God’s economy of Salvation.” Now the word, economy here, comes from the Greek word οἰκονομία (oikonomia) which Paul uses it to indicate the plan of God, the hidden dispensation of God, the plan of God that is now revealed in Christ to consist in God’s purpose to unite all things in Christ. (Romans 1:16-17)

By God’s action in the economy of salvation, God came to be understood, not as some divine, undifferentiated loner, not a singularity, but as a Trinity of Persons whose unity was identified with the person of the Father who is the Father of the Son and the spirator, the sender, of the Holy Spirit. So that God’s unity was understood, in the early church, as development of the Christian understanding of God as having a unity which is grounded, not in some idea of oneness, but in the person of the Father. That is, God’s unity was understood in terms of the personal nature of God.

It was because the economy of salvation revealed to the church the consistency of God’s personal commitment to Israel, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, that God was understood to be both one and three; and that God’s unity is not understood in terms of metaphysical idea but in terms of Person.

The expression of the doctrine of the Trinity is therefore not a theory about God, but moves to expression the mystery of God’s personal presence realised in history in the economy of salvation. The doctrine of the trinity brings together the way in which the church understood God personally, expresses and commits God to God’s people.

So, next time Trinity Sunday comes round and you have to either preach a sermon or do a children’s talk on the Trinity, forget three-cornered hats or ice-blocks and steam and so on. Instead, explain that the love of God the Father was so great that through His own Son, Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit, He showed to us His wish that all of us might be saved from death and be with God in His Kingdom forever. And in this the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are shown to us by the very work we do and worship we undertake in the church.

### PRAYER

Trinitarian God,  
You have revealed Yourself to us  
Through Your Son, Jesus  
and Given us the Holy Spirit  
That we might be enlightened to Your presence  
And empowered in our ministry.  
We thank You for Your church  
By which we see your economy of salvation  
being lived out and proclaimed  
Every time we gather and every time we serve You.  
Amen