

# Learning how to dance – Fr Carlo Calleja

The Trinity manifests deeper truths with practical implications for our life

Community

Religion

12 June 2022 | Fr Carlo Calleja | 

 3 min read

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Andrei Rublev's of The Trinity depicts the three angels who visited Abraham at the Oak of Mamre (detail).

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*Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity: Today's readings: Proverbs 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15*

How can the good in a pluralist society be served where there are probably as many concepts of the good as there are people? What happens when what I deem to be good for myself or for my group is in conflict with your good? Can we speak of a good at all? Or is it simply a question of claiming, "This serves me best and to hell with the rest!"?

Some might argue that since we are all different, it is impossible to ever reach any consensus about the good. The good, they would argue, is subjective, and the good cannot even be spoken of, let alone agreed upon.

This is clearly a misconception. More than three centuries before Christ, the Greek philosopher Aristotle had argued that the good of the individual cannot be considered distinctly from the good of the polis, that is, of the city-state.

Of course, by polis we do not mean the faceless and nameless masses. The polis is the very concrete and real network of relationships, close and far, in which each one of us is enmeshed. These relationships form us as persons and these same relationships constitute the community in which we thrive.

It is only insofar as we envisage ourselves as forming part of a community can we finally agree on some kind of concept of the good and a means to achieve it. This implies that we

cannot speak of the good of the community as long as there are individuals who are excluded from it.

The feast we are celebrating today, the Solemnity of the Blessed Trinity, reveals itself as a mystery not because it is an enigma that cannot be solved, but a mysterion, a sign which manifests deeper truths with very practical implications for our life.

The great Enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant is known to have accused the Trinity of being a “useless doctrine”. On deeper reflection, however, we come to realise that the Blessed Trinity constantly invites us to share in their divine life. The empty place at the table of the three angels under the oak of Mamre in Rublev’s icon evokes this very clearly.

In today’s gospel, Jesus tells his disciples gathered around him during the Last Supper: “The Spirit will take from what is mine and declare it to you”, and “Everything that the Father has is mine”.

The Early Church Fathers used a fancy name – *perichoresis* – to describe this love or “indwelling” of the three persons of the Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some authors have likened this to a dance of intense love that characterises the relationship between these three persons.

The relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is programmatic of our entire life. Insofar as it is the source of all creation and the final destination of all that is, the Blessed Trinity also proposes how we are to live out our relationships.

I find it very significant that in [Amoris Laetitia](#), while upholding the Holy Family as the icon for every family to imitate, Pope Francis introduces family love as an icon of the Holy Trinity. “The Family,” Francis asserts, “is the image of God, who is a communion of persons.” This is how practical and how close to home the Trinity is.

By practising love in our families, especially when we become aware of the differences that separate us, we grow in our understanding of the self-giving love of the three persons of the Trinity. But this does not apply only to the intimate relationships of family life.

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Our concept of God influences also the way in which we do politics. If asked what our political agenda is we should be able to reply unhesitatingly: “It is the Trinity”.

If only we learn the steps of this dance of love.

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