



In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit - Amen.

Dear brothers, dear sisters,

John the Evangelist presents us today with difficult phrases and images

"As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, let them also be in us."

"...and they shall be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me."

You in me I him them etc., it sounds like quite a mess.

But it becomes clear that it is about connections: there is Jesus, who is perceivable as the speaker.

And there is the one whom he addresses as Father. Then there are the believers who are simply named in the plural. But we are still not much further along in solving the confusion.

An image may help to support further thoughts.

They all have a copy of the well-known icon of the Trinity by Andrei Rublev in their hands.

There we recognise: Three angels are gathered around a table, differing only in the colour of their robes. There is no recognisable hierarchy among them. The title "Trinity" tells us that they are not simply three angels, but God himself. And we recognise the connection to the story of Abraham, which we heard as a reading today. Alternately, this text from the Book of Genesis speaks of three beings and one Lord. This is not a spelling mistake, but is trying to describe an experience. It becomes clear that the same source is always meant, from which the various messages to Abraham emanate. Sometimes one - sometimes three.

We are used to describing the Trinity of God as the unity of Father Son and Holy Spirit: Mathematically this means  $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$ . I am only a simple monk and art historian and this equation is too difficult for me to solve.

And certainly it is interesting to see how much research has been done on the definition of the three persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit and their relationship to each other. Today, I want to focus on the quality of the connection. Because one thing is very clear: it is about the relationship of the three, about the connectedness of the three among themselves.

To be in relationship requires at least two people, one alone cannot be in relationship. But two are still alone with themselves and tend towards seclusion. Truly multifaceted relationship begins with three people, because each has at least two relationships.

Let us return to the contemplation of the Rubelyov icon. Three are gathered around a table, sharing a meal, facing each other and in eye contact with each other. They are not merged into one. They remain three, but several signs of relationship and connection are perceptible. One can say relationship and connectedness are fundamental qualities, not to say relationship and connectedness constitute the divinity of the one in whom we Christians believe.

The evangelist John has Jesus say, "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, let them also be in us." What can this mean in relation to Rubelyov's account?

Father Richard Rohr, a well-known American Franciscan friar and spiritual teacher draws attention to the fact that there is still a vacancy at the table in the painting, for an angel sits behind the table and one at each side. The side facing the viewer is empty. We are invited to take a seat at this table and thus participate in the relational event that is God.

The evangelist John says nothing else:

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, they also shall be in us.  
I am convinced that this is a promise we can trust.

I don't know about you, but I am always shocked by this great invitation.

The question quickly arises as to whether we are even worthy of taking a seat at this table. But this is a temptation to stay completely with ourselves and not really engage with the invitation.

Richard Rohr describes what it is all about: "What our tradition believes is that God is a fountain fullness of love, a water wheel flowing constantly in one direction: Father to Son, Son to Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit to Father-always outflowing, always outpoured, always giving, never taking, but only receiving what the other gives.

Just as we are invited to sit at the table, we are invited to participate in this flow of love.

John the Evangelist is no stranger to these thoughts, as we heard in the Gospel: I have made your name known to them and will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and so that I may be in them.

It is worthwhile to engage with this promise, to engage with the relationship, with the bond: On the one hand, they give us peace and support; on the other hand, we too - strengthened in this way - may give relationship and connectedness to others.

This does not mean that we are spared suffering and pain. Jesus also went the way of passion and death, but it did not stop there. The flow of love did not prevent suffering, but it did not leave him in death, it transformed suffering into eternal life.

Let us be encouraged to open ourselves to this great gift again and again.

The promises enable us to build fruitful relationships, to meet each other without prejudice, such as on a day like today.

Big words and big pictures remain.

Richard Rohr has recognised that a small word helps to approach these great experiences of

relationship and connectedness again and again. The small word AND.  
So in conclusion I would like to share a poem by Richard Rohr with you.

The praise of the "And"

And protects us from the either-or.  
And allows us to be both and.  
And teaches us to say yes.  
And teaches us to be patient and long-suffering.  
And allows us to always appreciate both sides.  
And allows us to always criticize both sides.  
And allows us to ask forgiveness and apologize.  
And don't trust any love that isn't also justice.  
And does not trust justice that is not also love.  
And is the way of mercy.  
And is the secret paradox in all things.  
And is the secret of the Trinity.  
Amen