



SIGNS OF LIFE: *Community*

This week we invite you to reflect on the sign of Community:

This week, we will consider the sign of Community, at a time when our own regular communities are disrupted. Many of us might be struggling with feelings of isolation or, on the other hand, a challenging proximity to those with whom we dwell. We've certainly never been more aware of how closely our lives are linked with others. We pray that this week's reflections will help us all to embrace how life in community is a sign of God's presence with us and within us.

Scripture:

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. (*John 15:12-17*)

Collect:

Almighty Triune God, we thank you for the gift of community, by which we share life's journey and grow together. May we follow your example of mutual self-giving and love to bless each other with an ever-widening embrace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who dances with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in Trinity of persons now and forever. Amen.

Reflection:

The very nature of the Triune God is community. The Father, Son and Spirit are One in reciprocal self-giving and love. Because human beings are made in the image of a relational God, humans are not meant to be separate and isolated from one another. Rather, we are called to live together in shared community.

Consider this Rublev icon, which could be a great help for your own reflection and prayer.



We see Three Persons, all with a halo, depicting their holiness. On the left is the image of the Father; on the right, is the Spirit; and, in the centre, is Christ; an image of companionship. What captures *your* attention in this scene?

Practice:

1. Find new ways to be fully present with others this week. Put away distractions, and ask them to do the same. Remember that Jesus dwells in each of us and is manifest among community, even if we cannot be physically together.

2. We don't do church alone because God isn't alone. God is community and invites us into community. The Christian story is one of families and of communities. Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches." Who is your community here and now?
3. We all value living in community but there is something about the gift of silence that allows us to open our hearts to greater compassion for other people as we take time to reflect on our own and seek to recognise and revere the mystery of every person. Each person is a mystery to us, and there are aspects of that person's life that we will never know, no matter how well we know them. Only God alone can know this person as they truly are. Invite silence into all your interactions today.
4. Community can offer a container that is safe enough and supportive enough to help other people – and ourselves – to heal, especially at times like these, when many are feeling confused and lost. Call a friend just to catch up.