

Once there was an elderly man, and one evening he was taking his usual walk. He was enjoying the crisp night air and the wind blowing gently. But suddenly he heard a voice crying out, 'Help me! Help me!' The man looked around and saw no one and so he continued his walk. Again he heard a tiny voice, 'Help me, help me!' This time he looked down and he saw a small frog. He gently lifted up the frog and looked at it intently. The frog spoke, 'I am really a very beautiful princess. If you will kiss me, I will turn back into a princess and I will hug you and kiss you and love you forever.' The man thought for a moment, placed the frog in his top pocket, and continued walking. The little frog looked up out of the pocket and asked, 'Why don't you kiss me?' The man looked down and said, 'Frankly, at this stage of my life, I'd rather have a talking frog.'

The point of this story is, That we all exist in relationship to others. The nature and style of those relationships determine just what might be achieved and what value they have. The thing about the Trinity to which we can best relate is relationship itself. Our very existence is defined by who we are in relation to others, even if it's to a frog. The elderly gentleman in our story probably thought that if the frog became a princess, she'd run off with someone younger and

leave him alone again. So he'd prefer the company of the frog to nothing. One of the great successes with people in long-term institutional care is pet therapy. Being able to somehow go out of themselves to an animal - be it a cat, a dog, or a rabbit - has a therapeutic effect on people. In the same way, infants desperately need others, usually their mothers, in order to survive. All human experience is a shared experience. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that we are made by our relationships.

For example, just think about the best experiences of our lives. What were they? Did they have to do with a friend, a parent or someone else who had a special place in our life. You know, that person to whom we could open up and be ourselves completely without any phoniness, or the person who appreciated and shared things that were really significant to us. 'What great times we had!' is probably the way we would describe it. Conversation late into the night - remembered with delight. Maybe a time spent in hospital when a regular visitor brought gifts and hope to cheer us up. All of these times were, perhaps, nothing spectacular in themselves, but they were special to us for one reason or another. We desperately need 'companionship,' to be able to 'break bread' with others.

**Conversely, the worst times in our lives have probably been the ones when we felt alone, abandoned. Just like our Lord felt in the Garden of Gethsemane and during his passion. He knows what that feels like, even to the point of sweating blood. Depriving someone of companionship is one of the worst possible punishments. That is exactly what solitary confinement is in prisons: the ultimate and worst form of punishment. People become 'alienated' from others and become unable to relate effectively. Lack of relationship is a terrible and troubling state in which to be.**

**Have you ever met a couple who are so much in love that you can almost reach out and hold it? Or friends whose loyalty and trust seems to touch everyone around them? Or parents or siblings whose concern for one another is so evident that it actually changes the circumstances of people around them? Such relationships are probably as close as we humans can ever get to knowing what the divine love really is.**

**Every striving of our souls for union, every reaching out for companionship, every urge for a hug or an embrace, every act of love gives indirect testimony to the Trinity. The Trinity says that God is community, that we seek. The Trinity says that God is relationship that we search for. The Trinity says**

**that God is love and we yearn for love. We can't help ourselves. We're made in that image and likeness. We mirror our origins.**

**So if someone asks you to explain the Trinity, you can respond without hesitation: 'The Trinity is the relationship of God the Father with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.**

**And because we have been created in the image and likeness of God, we can only exist in relationship with others. we are who we are because God is who God is.'**