**The Ven Sam Rushton, Archdeacon of York, reflects on Trinity Sunday, 26th May.**

A few weeks ago, I was watching a program on TV hosted by Professor Hannah Fry about how lifts work. It's part of a series where she takes apart, often with great relish, ordinary items of daily technology to see how they work. Lifts seem like very simple things, but the technology which makes them safe is very clever, which is very reassuring to most of us who don't like heights.

I was fascinated by her description of the lift cable and why it is so strong, and she did this great experiment where she showed that three separated strands of string can hold a lot less weight than if the three strands are twisted together. As I've done here, according to Google and the BBC, this idea was first used to make mining a lot safer in the mid-1800s.

But it is interesting that in the book of Ecclesiastes, written more than 3000 years ago, it says that a cord of three strands is not easily broken. So, this seems like a much older bit of wisdom, perhaps long-forgotten. The strength of the strands of string or wire is increased because of the nature of the relationship between them when they're twisted together, mainly the friction that exists as the strands rub against one another. Under tension, there is a constant but imperceptible interaction between the strands, which gives them their strength.

This Sunday is Trinity Sunday, when we will be thinking again about our God who is three and one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the world. As a former Sunday School teacher and long-standing preacher, I can tell you it's the Sunday in the year we all dread. How to explain this extraordinary idea that our God is one, but also three? Three distinguishable persons, but fundamentally the same. And we reach for the usual pictures, for steam, water, and ice; one chemical, but three states. The three-legged stool, a very stable form of seating. The father to whom we pray, the son who prays alongside us, and the spirit within us, who makes our prayers alive. We walk again the tightrope between trying to make simple something which is really difficult and falling into downright heresy.

So, this year, I hesitantly add one more model to your range of images of the Trinity: three strands making one rope, and the thing that makes it strong is the relationship between them - which in the Trinity, is love. And the more you place your burdens on the strands, the more that relationship of love bites into the cord. Love increasing, the more it is tested.

If you watch the Hannah Fry programme, who explains all of this much better than I can, she has one last revelation about stranded cords. If I were to cut one of these strands - remember this thing is currently very close to its breaking point - I wonder what happens.

(here, Sam cuts one of the three strands in the rope behind her)

I have no idea what that has to say to us theologically, but it is immensely cool. So may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you and those who you love and those for whom you pray, this day and every day. Amen.