

Trinity Sunday (B)

26<sup>th</sup> May 2024

‘Trinity of Love’

Dt 4: The Lord is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath, He and no other. Ps 32: Happy the people the Lord has chosen as His own. Rom 8: Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. Mt 28: 16–20: *Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

When, I wonder, might we have first heard in our life that profound sequence of words, “*the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit*”? For some of us, maybe it was as our parents prayed over the miracle of their new-born child ... Or, perhaps, if we were baptized as a baby, it was on that Baptism day as we were held gently and in thanksgiving over the font, and the saving water was poured over our head. These words are not invented by humanity; they are given us by God Himself for our salvation, aren’t they?

The Gospel passage we’ve just heard, the final 5 vv. of Matthew’s Gospel, is one of the recommended texts for the celebration of Baptism. At the heart of that passage is the formula that the Church uses at every baptism ceremony of a new Christian: “*I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*” So, as it were, imbibed along with our mother’s milk, we drink in that Trinitarian idea of God. From the very first, we receive the knowledge

that the one God is truly three persons: Father, Son & Spirit. Probably the first prayer we ever learnt was the Sign of the Cross. Long before we can even begin to articulate what it means to believe in the Holy Trinity, we can say those words, along with all Christians, “*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*” This is part of the mother’s milk that we drink in from Holy Mother Church. She instils in us exactly what we have received in truth from Jesus: that He is the Son; that His Father is distinct from Him, though one with Him; and that the Holy Spirit of them both is sent from them upon the Church and the world for its sanctification.

This is why we celebrate the feast of the Holy Trinity only after we have completed the great cycle of Easter feasts: *Resurrection — Ascension — Pentecost*. For it is in these historical events surrounding the sacred ministry of Jesus that we come to understand the Trinity. Jesus speaks of His Father, *Abba*, in heaven; He speaks of returning to Him, and of sending the Holy Spirit. So, the Trinity is not some complicated piece of theology dreamt up by the Church long after Jesus. The loving Trinity *is* the revelation of Jesus, His

teaching us of the inner life of God.

Even in the very last moment of His earthly ministry — as recorded in the final line of Matthew’s Gospel — Jesus is still teaching us, and He says: “*I am with you always, yes, to the end of time.*” It is a very consoling promise as He ascends to the Father. How does He intend to fulfil that promise to be with us? — precisely through the gift of God the Spirit poured out upon the Church, at Pentecost and then in the Sacraments. The Spirit mediates the Son to us, and with Jesus unites us to the Father. This is how we are able to be “*with Him to the end of time.*” The Holy Trinity draws us into His own, active, inner life of love, welcoming us into His blessed ‘family’ life.

Equally important in those final words of Christ to the apostles is the actual instruction to baptize. Each and every time we baptize a new member into the body of Christ’s Church, we do so, “*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*” We do exactly as Christ asks of us as He withdraws from our sight at the Ascension: we baptize with that Trinitarian formula from the Gospel, “*in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*” This is

our distinctively Christian understanding of God — it is the new revelation that Christ brings to the world, and it means that we are reborn and live our faith in the God who is a *communion of loving divine persons*. Honestly, how much more attractive and beautiful is this, than an idea of God merely as single, solitary, powerful and far off?

Once we understand, from the testimony of Jesus Himself (“*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me!*”), that God is three in one — three loving persons in one supreme God — then I am sure that we are drawn to love Him more. Since He Himself is a union of loving, a loving that He has then shared with His Creation — particularly the spiritual part of Creation, man and the angels — then we see how closely His nature and ours are connected. It is because He is 3-in-1 in a perfect loving union that we, made in His image, have this capacity to love at all, ourselves. That’s to say, if there were no Holy Trinity, there would be no human love. *Love is not derived from matter, from atoms* (it can’t be!); love is derived from *spirit*, from the God who makes our spiritual soul in His image of love, His own Triune Love.

It's in this way, I think, that we have to appreciate the mystery of the Trinity, with the heart and not only with the head. That is, not as some sort of a puzzle to be struggled with, nor as a conundrum simply to be put frustratingly to one side and ignored. Let's not be reluctant as to this teaching, as were those apostles who hesitated to fall down before Jesus. No, the Holy Trinity is the *centre* of all our faith's teachings, not a side-issue or quaint or esoteric doctrine. The love that the Father has for the Son, and the Son has for the Father — these are things that Jesus speaks passionately about throughout the Gospel. And then, as He nears His Passion and His Ascension from the face of the earth, Jesus speaks powerfully and convincingly of the fact that the Holy Spirit — whom He calls "*the Paraclete*" (i.e. the 'Advocate,' 'Comforter,' 'Counsellor,' or 'Consoler') — will be sent as His gift upon the Church's people to bring them joy and life. To reflect on the Trinity, then, is to enter into the mystery of God's profound love: the love that He is and always has been; the love that He so dearly wants to share with the world He has made.

The second reading today allows St Paul a great *cry of*

*joy* as He speaks about the Father, the Son and the Spirit. We are drawn by the Spirit, he says, into the inner life of God: co-heirs with Christ, moved by the Spirit to cry "*Abba, Father*" to the God who made us. This is what loving God the Holy Trinity means. He is not aloof or unfeeling, but is involved and deeply compassionate. And we, *so in need of real love*, know that God the Father, Son and Spirit is the greatest treasure of love. Our human loving only poorly reflects His love. Yet we ask in prayer again and again that He pour out on us a greater measure of His love. Let's gaze towards heaven and God the Holy Trinity today: let's be in awe of the Love that He is, and ask that He teach us ever better how to love Him and love one another.

*God the Father of heaven ...*

*God the Son, Redeemer of the world ...*

*God the Holy Spirit ...*

*Holy Trinity, One God ... Have mercy on us, save us,  
and give us Your peace.*