Homily – Trinity Sunday (B) – 2018

*Deut. 4: 32-34, 39-40; Rom. 8:14-17 & Mt.28:16-20*

It is always difficult being the preacher on Trinity Sunday. Indeed, many are terrified at the thought of it. I remember only too well that in the five years I was sacristan at Ampleforth, and therefore tasked with arranging the weekday and Sunday celebrants, only one person ever volunteered to do it – the other four I had to do myself! Perhaps it’s not too difficult to understand why. After all, so many great saints and theologians have struggled with this great mystery – one God in three Persons, a Trinity in Unity – a seeming paradox, but a paradox which stands at the very core of our Christian faith. The preacher is tempted to try to explore the whole nature of God as He is, to reflect on this paradox of divine mathematics, to offer some new insight or analogy or understanding – and all in just ten minutes or so! It is a challenge the preacher seems bound to fail in, and hence the hesitancy in volunteering.

And yet our readings this morning seem to take us in a very different direction. Rather than being a puzzle to solve, a mathematical and philosophical mystery to unravel, our readings today show us that the God we worship – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is not a distant, unmoved mover, an infinitely powerful, all-seeing and all-knowing “Other”. Rather, He is the God whom we encounter, the God who comes to meet us.

In that first reading from Deuteronomy is reminding the people of Israel of their *experience* of God. Indeed, that experience was of power, of majesty, of signs, wonders and fearsome terrors as he rescued his people from Egypt – but it is not an experience of a distant deity, but rather of one who “gets his hands dirty”, as it were, for the sake of his Chosen Ones. Indeed, earlier in the same chapter from which our reading is taken, Moses says something very striking: *For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?* (Deut. 4:7). That is not theory; it is Israel’s experience. God is the one who comes close, God is the one who is near at hand. God is the one who is intimately involved in the life of his people – so intimately that their frequent failings and forgetfulness wound him. And it is not just in Deuteronomy, of course, that we see this “intimate God”. All through the Old Testament – in the stories of the Patriarchs, in the pleadings and promises of the Prophets – we see the same thing, the God who loves and is close to his people, and longs for them to come close to Him.

And we see something similar in those closing words of Matthew’s gospel. The Eleven encounter the Risen Jesus who has come to meet with them. In him, their friend, their teacher, they now also recognise – in some real but mysterious way – their God, the promised Christ who has brought salvation. And so they bow down before him. And it is Jesus himself who gives them their apostolic mission: Go, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They are to go and tell the world of what they have experienced of the closeness of God, and they are to baptise in the name of the Trinity – with exactly the same words with which each one of us was baptised, in faithful obedience to the Lord’s revelation and command. But there is still more. For the gospel ends with that great promise, the promise that God will continue to be close, will continue to love and intervene on behalf of his Chosen People: And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time. The intimacy of God is one with the intimacy of Christ – an abiding presence, an eternally abiding closeness.

And perhaps, almost the most intimate of all, there is the indwelling of the Spirit. And again, this is not just theory. Paul and the Eleven had seen the Spirit at work, had experienced that Spirit of transformation and power at work in them and in others. And so Paul can say that everyone moved by the Spirit is a child of God, that Spirit which makes us cry out “Abba, Father!”, that Spirit which makes us the brothers and sisters of Christ himself – not just as a nice idea, not just as a metaphor – but as co-heirs with the Lord himself.

And so how should we celebrate this great mystery of the closeness of God, this closeness of the Trinity acting for our salvation? Well, we do so as we always do, with the most intimate act of love which God can make – when Christ himself, by the power of the Spirit and to the glory of His Father, gives his Body and Blood to be our food and our life. Happy, indeed, are the people the Lord has chosen as his own – and that is you and me.

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26.5.18

Bidding Prayers: Trinity Sunday 2018

Fr O: Father, through your Holy Spirit, you gave us Christ your Son as our Redeemer, so that we might have life through him. Filled now with that life, we pray for needs of the Church and the World

R: The response to each petition is:

***Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit*.**

R: Father Almighty, eternal God, in the name of your Son send your Holy Spirit upon you Church, and especially upon Francis our Pope and Bernard our Bishop; may the Comforter preserve us in unity, harmony and the fullness of truth. *(Response)*

Lord, inspire many men and women to work as labourers in your harvest, teaching all nations and baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; strengthen them all in the faith. *(Response)*

Lord, support all who suffer persecution on account of Christ’s name; give them the Spirit of Truth who will, as he promised, speak through them. *(Response)*

Father almighty, whose wisdom is beyond understanding and whose mercy is beyond measure, inspire us in love and in our search for truth; pour out your Spirit upon us, and strengthen all those of our students preparing for and taking examinations. *(Response)*

Father of all the living, bring the faithful departed to share your glory; with your Son and with the Holy Spirit, may we all be reunited and reign eternally with you in heaven. We pray especially today for Norbert Kunisch and for Abbot Timothy Wright.

We unite these and all our prayers with those of Mary, our Mother, as we say: ***Hail Mary***...

Fr O: Almighty Father,

your Son commanded us to ask for all our needs in his name.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we make these petitions before you;

hear them in your love,

and answer them as best accords with your most holy will,

through Christ our Lord.