

## THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

*Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20*

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### REFLECTION 1: THE FAMILY OF GOD

I think that it is worth noting that the New Testament writers never even made an attempt to explain the Trinity. Indeed they never even used the word 'Trinity'. They simply spoke of God in three different ways and let it stand at that. Sometimes they referred to God as Father, sometimes God as Son and sometimes, God as Holy Spirit. Indeed they occasionally used all three expressions together, but always without explanation.

So instead of trying to explain the unexplainable, I think we should listen to the teachings about the Trinity and try to make out what they say to us about God. It seems to me that it tells us about three things and the first is this.

God by his very nature is outgoing and he reaches out to people (Deut. 4:34). He is a Father and any father worthy of the name is involved with his family – he provides for them and gives to them. He feels what they feel; he shares their loves and sorrows, their triumphs and failures. People who do not believe in the Trinity often think and speak of God in terms that are remote and cold. But the doctrine of the Trinity speaks to us of a Father who is joyfully involved with his human family. His nature is to give – always reaching out, he holds nothing back. The Father is not a lonely isolated aristocrat, but rather an involved and living Father, whose nature it is to be magnanimous. God the Father is always working.

The second thing the Trinity says about God is that he has become concrete in history, in and through the life of Jesus Christ, his Son. Jesus was of course a real person, a real human being - an incredible, remarkable man, but nevertheless a man. Then somewhere along the way, they began to see something else in him and Peter was the first to spot it. He said, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God'. Thomas called to him 'My Lord and my God'. John wrote of him as the 'Word made flesh', who made his dwelling among us and we have seen his glory – the glory of an only Son coming from the Father. The good news that they shared was that God had invaded human history in and through the life of a carpenter from the plains of Galilee. They had seen him with their eyes and touched him with their hands, so that never again could they think of God as an abstraction. God for them had become concrete and specific in the life of a man. Francis Thompson was correct when he called him 'The hound of heaven' – he has taken the initiative, he has moved out of eternity and into time and space, he has become one of us, and that is the second thing the Trinity says about God.

The third is this; that God in the person of the Holy Spirit is always with us. True he is the Father in heaven; he is the Son that lived in Galilee over 2,000 years ago. The message however is not complete until we speak of God as the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, he is as one writer expressed it; the 'kiss of God', our constant companion, our Advocate, our guide and friend wherever life may lead us.

I cannot explain God, but if you ask me where he is, I will answer in terms of the Trinity. I will say that God is in heaven, the Almighty God Creator of heaven and earth. I will say that God is in history through Jesus Christ, his only Son and our Lord. Then I will stretch out my hand and say that God is with us

here in our world today. Finally, I will put my hands over my heart and say; God is here living inside me, just as he is living within you. That is what the Trinity says about God.

## **REFLECTION 2:**

## **THE TRINITY IS OUR HOME**

When it comes to the idea of three persons in one God, the mind falters. The mind comes face to face with a mystery. To give some faint inkling of the mystery that we will never be able to grasp in this life, take the example of three musical notes played together. There are three notes, but the notes form only one sound. Or take the example of water. Water can exist in three different forms: as gas, that is, steam; as solid, that is ice; or as liquid. Yet, chemically, all three are identical. It is how the Divine has been experienced through the ages, as a unity, God the Father, God the Saviour as well as God the Spirit, always and eternally in relationship, not as three Gods but one.

Blessed Cardinal Newman compares this great mystery to the sun in the sky. The sun as we know is the source of all life for us. It is the source of heat and light and growth and in a certain sense of all we are – and yet, we cannot look at the sun. And if we attempt to look at it we are blinded. And so it is with the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. That the Father loves the Son for all eternity and that the fruit of their eternal love is the Holy Spirit, baffles our small, puny minds to understand. The Scriptures (Bible) tell us that there are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Father, the Creator, is God and that is intelligible enough. That the Son is God is also perfectly intelligible – the one we know from his miracles and feel for through our knowledge of him from the Gospels. Then the Holy Spirit is God. Jesus breathed on us when he first gave us his Spirit at Pentecost and ever since, from the time of our baptism that spirit dwells in each Christian giving us enormous dignity as temples of God's presence in the universe. To respect that spirit dwelling in each of us is to live the Christian life – helping us to live like Jesus.

During the last half-year we have been engaged in tracing the various stages of Our Lord's coming on earth. We began last December with Advent and we prepared for the coming of the Saviour, the one promised by the prophets and who would save his people from their transgressions. At Christmas we adored Jesus' coming on earth, his becoming flesh like us in all things – sin excepted. Then during Lent we followed Jesus into the wilderness, his fast and prayer and his resistance against temptation. Then came Holy Week and we accompanied Jesus as he was led to his passion and death on Calvary. This led to the Resurrection and the story of the early Church. We witnessed his Ascension into heaven withdrawing his physical presence from us but sending us the Comforter who would somehow live within us. Finally today we remember a most glorious mystery – the most Holy Trinity. To God the Father who first loved us and accepted us in his beloved Son, washing us with his own blood, and God the Holy Spirit who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts.