

Trinity Sunday

There is a saying, 'The eyes are the windows of the soul'. We can learn quite a bit about someone we have never met, but truly to know them as a person we have to meet them, and they must be willing to 'look us in the eye' – not just literally, but in the sense of being open with us.

As human beings we can know something about God simply from the way things are. The universe is his creation and bears his imprint. That there is anything rather than nothing at all tells us that there is a power that brought all things into being and sustains them in existence. This world abounds with life unlike millions of other planets. This too tells us something about God – he wants to share the gift of life. For thousands of years human beings have had a sense that there is more to existence than what we can see and feel here and now – cave paintings and burial goods. For the people of Israel, God is a God of action, who intervenes in a special way in their history and destiny. He is not a remote being who is content to wind up the universe, as it were, and watch from afar. Moses sums up this belief in our first reading: "The Lord is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other. Keep his laws and commandments as I give them to you today, so that you and your children may prosper and live long in the land that the Lord your God gives you for ever."

However, the people of Israel do not yet really know God. He is a Father and benefactor, but they may not see him face to face, or make an image of him. The fullness of God's love will be revealed only with the Incarnation. Two thousand years ago God chose to share our human flesh and be born to a human mother. Jesus is the human face of God. God chooses to look us in the eye and allow us to know him in a personal way. Our human limitations mean that we can truly enter a relationship with him only through Jesus. He is the ultimate expression of God's love. He is willing even to give his life for us as a sign of friendship. Now we know God not just as a remote Creator or father-figure or benefactor. He is as close to us as our human parents. Jesus teaches us to call him 'Abba' – an intimate and affectionate address – Daddy! He fills us with the Spirit that makes us sons and daughters of God. The Spirit is not some impersonal created force but God himself coming to dwell in our hearts. In St John's Gospel Jesus promises, "The Father and I will come and make our home in you".

The word 'trinity' may be a technical one that evolved in the life of the early Church as a way of expressing what we believe, but it is not the adoption of some pagan divine threesome from Egypt or the Middle East, as Jehovah's Witnesses suggest. It is simply describing how God reveals himself to us through Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit in the pages of the New Testament. This is clearly expressed in today's Gospel. The Father has entrusted to the Son all his authority, not only on earth but in heaven, including the gift of the Holy Spirit. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you." Although he has returned to heaven, to the right hand of the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit he remains with us, enabling us to know God in a personal way. "Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."

The response that God looks for from us is not in the end a matter of intellectual understanding - who can know what it is like to be another human being let alone God! - but of love and service that comes from the heart. We acknowledge God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in our profession of faith and prayer but above all by living in the way that Jesus taught us.