

Trinity Sunday 2017

“God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life”. Who is the Son? What does it mean when he is baptised by John in the waters of the Jordan and the Holy Spirit comes down upon him in the form of a dove?

There are many things about the world that we do not understand or cannot know directly. Scientists try to put together how the universe came into being by studying faint traces of light or radiation from deep space. Our knowledge of God would be just as limited if we were left to our own resources – we would just see traces in the world around us and in our own lives. However, God chose to reveal himself to human beings, first through the history of a chosen people, Israel, and then in the fullness of time by coming among us in Jesus. It is through exploring what the New Testament has to tell us about Jesus and his relationship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit that the early Christian community gradually came to a settled position that there is only one God – not three Gods – and yet Father, Son and Spirit are all equally God. Today we celebrate not just the gift of this limited understanding on our part but that God allows us to enter an intimate relationship with him.

We are drawn into the life of God at the moment of our baptism. We are baptized (=immersed) in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and “we are called to participate in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here in the darkness of faith, and beyond death in the eternal light” The Father pours the Holy Spirit into us through the outward sign of water and we are made one with his beloved Son Jesus Christ. We are confirmed with the anointing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the Sacrament of Penance our sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In marriage the human love of a couple is lifted up and becomes an embodiment of the love of God – a source of mutual grace.

In the Eucharist we give thanks to God the Father for all he has given us by offering to him in time the sacrifice Jesus made once for all on the Cross. Jesus stands at the right hand of the Father pleading for us. Through the lips of the priest he says, ‘This is my body...this is my blood’. The Holy Spirit, his unseen presence, brings this about. And so in the Mass and Holy Communion we are united in our inmost being with the life and presence of God.

Priests are ordained by the laying on of hands and anointing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This unites us in a special way with Christ the High Priest so that through the grace of ordination and power of the Holy Spirit we may be at the service of God the Father and bring the grace of the sacraments to his people. In illness and our last hour, when the priest will anoint us, he will commend our soul into God’s loving care in the name of the Father who created us, of the Son who has redeemed us, and of the Holy Spirit who has sanctified us.

The whole of our Christian existence is taken up into the life of the Trinity, who lives in us in a state of grace: “We will come to him – Jesus promised us – to make our home in Him.” However, the essence of love is that it is not enclosed or focused on self but outgoing. This is why the love of God was manifested by bringing the whole of creation into being, and giving us a glimpse of the dynamic of love in his own being. This gift of relationship with God calls for our love to be outgoing too. This is what motivated St Paul to write to the Christians at Corinth and to close not just with a brief ‘Goodbye’ but a spiritual blessing. “Brothers, we wish you happiness; try to grow perfect; help one another. Be united; live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with the holy kiss. All the saints send you greetings. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”