

The Holy Trinity Trinity Sunday

This Sunday, “Trinity Sunday”, might well be considered the Patronal Sunday of our parish, because we have adopted the Name of the Holy Trinity as our church name. So this Sunday is of particular significance to us, not only because it marks the beginning of the “Trinity Season” of the Church Calendar, the longest of all the church seasons, but because it is in a way “our” Sunday.

The concept of the Holy Trinity --that God exists in three separate Persons, who, though separate, make up one God-- is a challenging and difficult idea, to say the least. It has caused no end of discussions and disputes. It occupied the minds of great Church Councils. So utterly important is this one doctrine, that it took centuries for the Church to find a way of expressing the matter effectively, and to universally accept it. Its place in Christian belief is central. It is hardly a matter that can be comfortably set aside as an area of irresolvable dispute.

We must admit at the outset that the idea, at its core, is ineffable. It is past comprehension. Though we may think we can satisfactorily define the Holy Trinity, for example, through the medium of the Athanasian Creed, we have at best tried to put into words something that defies expression.

Very significantly, this idea of God as “inexpressible” reminds me of the extraordinary deference to the Name of God accorded by Jewish thinking. He is considered unknowable..., so highly exalted and past understanding that to even utter His sacred Name is considered blasphemy. For the pious Jew, it is precisely God’s absolute inscrutability that makes Him worthy of worship. He remains forever beyond human reach, and so efforts to find Him remain a lifelong pursuit that can never possibly be fully rewarded. I can’t help but wonder if this engenders that poignant frustration and sense of incompleteness that has brought down upon the Jewish world such a pall of sadness and desperate longing that on some level characterizes all of Jewish life. It’s as if all existence is consigned to an endless, and apparently even rewardless, quest.

But marvelously, in Jesus Christ, this search finally finds its fulfillment, its end, its Answer. Jesus becomes for us the means of absolutely identifying the nature and character of God. Think of the Apostle’s words in his Epistle to the Colossians:

1:15-19 *He [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily...*

This is a very big part of why the Gospel is such extraordinary Good News: God has made Himself, through Christ, both knowable and tangible. He has come to earth in the form of a Man

whose every movement, word, and action are a direct statement to us about the character and nature of the invisible God.

And yet the very appearance of God in the flesh still leaves for us the inexplicable idea of how God can simultaneously exist in Heaven, and also appear on earth, as the New Testament teaches. Furthermore, we are introduced in those same pages to the Holy Spirit, presented in such a way that we must conclude that He as well is a Person who shares in all the qualities of Deity. It's as if one mystery is wonderfully solved, only to be replaced by another. From God's previous revelations of Himself through the pages of the Old Testament, we could conclude much about Him, but our knowledge of Him remained fragmentary and incomplete. He was at once the Lawgiver, the Judge, the Creator of all things, the Father, and the loving Husband of Israel, and yet He remained high, distant, and out of sight. But when Christ came to earth, we saw Him fully and completely: *He who has seen Me has seen the Father* (John 14:9), Jesus said to His bewildered disciples. "Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Me!"

I cannot help but wonder what sort of vast relief, what sort of grand catharsis, will be provided to the Jewish people when they finally accept that the far off, awesome, incomprehensible and great God is fully explicated in Jesus Christ!

But I find it also delightful that God has yet left for us a glorious Mystery which we just cannot adequately answer. To me it seems excellent that there is so much about Him that we cannot yet comprehend, because this can only produce in us more wonder and worship. This includes the riddle of the Holy Trinity.

Some things will have to wait for Heaven to be fully understood. We do not possess the vocabulary nor the ability, confined as we are to these earthly minds and bodies, to take hold of things we cannot possibly grasp:

For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. (1 Cor. 13:9-12)

So, even in Christ, we can retain that reverent sense of respect for God --so evident in Jewish religious thought-- that humbly admits that there are an inexhaustible number of things about Him we can look forward to learning about.

For all Eternity will surely be required to do so.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.