

HOMILY NOTES – CCC Eastwood – TRINITY SUNDAY B

We have just made a quite long journey celebrating the long LENT-EASTERTIDE liturgical season of forty days of Lent from Ash Wednesday culminating in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus; and fifty days of Eastertide from Easter Sunday to the feast of Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit as promised. As the Church closes this long Lent-Eastertide liturgical season, this Sunday we are invited to pray and to reflect upon the nature of God as revealed in the Paschal mystery: the feast of the HOLY TRINITY.

It is through the experience of that mystery that the early Church came to know this God as three persons in one divine essence in that experience of nearness rather than the remoteness of this God.

There was a Greek monk of the 4th century known as Evagrius Pontus, who came from what is now Turkey in Asia but later lived out his vocation and mission in Egypt, who said: “God cannot be grasped by the mind. If God could be grasped, God would not be God.” There is also a much-repeated story about St Augustine of Hippo, one of the early intellectual giants of the Church around the year 400 AD. One day he was seen walking by the seashore trying to make sense out of this mystery of the Trinity and to arrive in an understandable explanation at least. As he walked along he saw a small boy on the beach, pouring seawater from a shell into a small hole in the sand. “What are you doing, my child?” asked Augustine. “I am emptying the sea into this hole,” the boy answered with an innocent smile. “But that is impossible, my dear child!” said Augustine. The boy stood up, looked straight into the eyes of Augustine and replied, “What are you trying to do – to comprehend the immensity of God with your small head – is even more impossible.” Then the boy vanished from his sight. The child was an angel of God sent to teach Augustine a lesson as if to wake Augustine from his day dreaming. Later Augustine would write: “You see the Trinity, only if you see love.” And Augustine explained it this way. According to him, the Father is the lover, the Son is the loved one and the Holy Spirit is the personification of the very act of loving. This means that we can only understand something of the mystery of the Holy Trinity more readily with the believing and loving heart than with our feeble mind. Only with our believing and loving heart can we truly experience the nearness of the Trinity rather than His remoteness.

Our first reading today is from the book of Deuteronomy (4:32-34, 39-40). This book outlines the commandments the people are to observe. In doing that Moses reminds them of the experience of God that lies behind them and the extraordinary privilege that Israel enjoys as a chosen people, rescued, singled out and addressed by God. It wants to relate the sense of a people who “heard the voice of the living God speaking from the heart of the fire, as you have heard it and remain alive?” to the revelation of God as Trinity that has come to us through the incarnation of the Son. In effect, Moses is telling his people, “We have a better God who gave us a better Law and we’re a better people than any of them. There is no other God like our God, the only Real God, and no other law like ours, and no other people like us, so shape up!” Just as Israel’s commitment to the Law (Torah) flowed from that experience of God “who is the Lord God, in the heavens above as on earth beneath,” so the experience of being grasped by God as Trinity stands behind the way of life incumbent upon us all and everyone of us as Christian believers.

This is what St Paul is insisting to us as Christian believers that “everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives but the spirit of Sons, and it makes us cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God...heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory.

And so returning to the Father, as the Gospel in Matthew today tells, Jesus completed his mission on earth. But just before his Ascension, Jesus entrusted to his disciples the mission of preaching and teaching the Good News and evangelising the whole world by bearing witness to Him through their lives. And Jesus also has given them the command to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity. "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." We are given a hint of what life will be in the description of Christ after his Resurrection. At the Ascension we see him entering fully into the life and glory of God. It is the prospect of that glory that should be driving force in our life, sharing in his sufferings so as to share in his glory. "Know that I am with you always to the end of time."

As we read and reflect on the readings on this Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, we are reminded that this central mystery of our faith is above all meant to be lived. As baptised Christians we all share in the life of the blessed Trinity and seek to invite others to share in his love. AMEN.
