

Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year B

The Most Holy Trinity

First reading:

The God of Love

(Deuteronomy 4.32-34, 39-40)

Why a reading from Deuteronomy on the feast of the Trinity? Because the Book of Deuteronomy is primarily about the love of God, the revelation of God's awesome, forgiving love to his people.

Love is the nature of God. We can never understand God, or what we mean by three Persons in one nature. Rather than the Church giving us a reading that might get us a tiny step nearer understanding what we might mean by that, the Church gives us the heart of the revelation to Jews and Christians that God is love.

Other religions feel their way towards this staggering and daunting truth, but to us it has been revealed. The revelation of God as love is a personal revelation, inviting us to a response in love, inviting us into a personal relationship with God as love. All the instructions that God gives us are simply meant to show us what that love means and how we can respond to it and stay close to God as our own God's people.

In the beginning man and woman were made in the image of God, and if I am to remain close to God I must shape my desires, my activities, my relationships to be like those of God.

Question:

Why do we pray to God through Jesus?

Second reading:

Son, Father and Spirit

(Romans 8.14-17)

The Trinity is often treated like a mathematical and philosophical problem. No attempt to understand the intra-Trinitarian relationships of the three Persons can get very far. The reading which the Church gives us, instead, gives an inkling of our triple relationship with God.

The basis is Jesus' own prayer, in which he called God 'Abba', the dignified and affectionate word in Jesus' own language by which a son addressed his father. The staggering next move is that Jesus told us that we might use the same form of address; so we use it, even in Aramaic.

It is, however, only because Christ has given us his Spirit as our spirit that we can do so. This Spirit is also the Spirit of the Father. Sometimes in the gospel it is Jesus, sometimes it is the Father who sends the Spirit. We can say that the Spirit gives us access to the Father and to the Son, or that the Father gives the Spirit of the Son, or that the Son gives us his Spirit.

In this way, the Trinity, each Person in a different way, imparts to us the love of God and draws us into God's own love.

Question:

If Christ is present in his Church, why is it so sinful?

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Gospel

(Matthew 28.16-20)

Baptism into the Trinity

On a superficial level, this gospel reading seems chosen because of the Trinitarian baptismal formula. It is the only time this formula comes in the scripture, and it is remarkable that the Trinitarian liturgical formula was already developed while the New Testament was being written.

At a deeper level, this reading of the final five verses of Matthew gives a wonderful Trinitarian view of the work of salvation. The words of the Risen Christ, 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' are reminiscent of the vision of the exalted Son of Man in Daniel, who comes to the One of Great Age, seated on his throne, and receives from him all power on earth.

Only Christ receives all power in heaven too, as 'the Son of God in power'. In this power, he sends out his disciples, promising his divine presence always. The promise of Christ's divine presence in his Church now, at the end of the gospel, balances the promise at the beginning in the name Emmanuel, given by the angel for the child. Emmanuel means 'God with us'. So the permanent presence of Christ is the message of the whole gospel.

Question:

If Christ is present in his Church, why is it so sinful?
