

Fr James' homily for The Most Holy Trinity 2020

First Reading: Exodus 34:4-9

Second Reading: Second Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 13:11-13

Gospel: John 3:16-18



***“O most Holy Trinity, I adore you!
My God, my God, I love you in the most Blessed Sacrament!”***

This is the prayer that came, by grace, into the hearts and minds of the three children of Fatima at the end of their first meeting with Our Lady. They had experienced being wrapped in an extraordinary light that came from Our Lady's hands, and they somehow knew that, as they later said, this light was God, surrounding them with his love, and in that light they saw themselves more clearly than in any mirror.

I find it reassuring that these small children could by instinct understand something so mature and complex about God, and they knew this was an experience of God the Most Holy Trinity, Father Son and Holy Spirit, even if they didn't know clearly what those words meant. So the prayer says it all: we are made to adore the wonder of God the Trinity, and we meet and understand something of his mystery when we are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

As I write this we are working to prepare our churches for the moment we can open the doors again, for everyone to come safely to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Perhaps, like me, you have spent some time at “virtual” Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament online during lockdown. This is a comfort and an aid to prayer. But it's not the same thing. We want to be near the mystery of God, because by instinct we know this teaches us what words and ideas and homilies can't teach us. *(How I hope we can get the doors open soon. Watch the website for details, and how you can help make this happen - we will need volunteers!)*

At first glance, the first reading today from the Book of Exodus, the story of the journey of the people of Israel from slavery to the promised land, is an odd one. Why is it here? I always reflect that wiser heads than mine have compiled the readings, so there must be a good reason! Here, Moses is walking back up Mount Sinai to meet with God. Remember, Moses had come down the mountain with the stone tablets of the Law, saw the faithlessness of the people, got angry and smashed up the tablets. Now he has replacement tablets of stone for God to write on...

God meets with Moses in the form of a cloud. That's a great image. God will always in this world be beyond how we understand reality. Doesn't the image in Exodus compare so well with the experience of Fatima, so many ages later? So, when we call

God Trinity, calling him one and calling him three, we are NEVER going to get our heads fully around this. And yet it is vital that we don't compromise or make do with a lesser or easier idea. That would be an idol of our own making - exactly what the Israelites did whilst Moses was up the mountain! Naming God is always problematic, but that's a subject for another homily. We are given the name we need: Jesus; and he teaches us to call God Father.

Instead, our reading tells us that God is compassion, tenderness, kindness and faithfulness. These things are who he is. Remember, we don't believe that God has love, or does love, but we believe God **IS** love, and love is a moving force: Lover, beloved and the power of love between them. One, Two, Three. Our own English wise man G.K. Chesterton said that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is just a technically precise way of saying that God is love.

So to our Gospel, this famous two verses of St John that sums up what we believe about God. Coming from the one who laid his head upon the breast of Jesus, he ought to know a thing or two. The Father, who is love, sends his Son, the beloved, and that very sending is love itself, the Holy Spirit.

Accepting that God is like this is the meaning of conversion. If you know that this strange and distinctive doctrine that defines our faith is true, it demands the continual changing of who you are. Every day. Day by day. This is what St Paul says to us today, from painful experience, and puts into words the Trinity in those words we sometimes call the "Grace." When the seers of Fatima felt and made their own the prayer I quoted at the start of this homily, about the Trinity, they were accepting a life of sacrificial, wonderful change (which for them was then played out under the curse of pandemic disease.) Our way in to the mystery of God the One and the Three, is and can only be Jesus - God with us: knowing him, loving him, being with him.

So if one of the unlooked for gains of this horrid time of trial the world is going through is that we one day - soon, let us hope!- come through the door of church to bow down and worship before the Blessed Sacrament, knowing that miraculous presence in a new and deeper way, then we will have gained something priceless.

Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Trinity Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch.