

Trinity Sunday (A)

15<sup>th</sup> June 2014

'Trinity: source of all love'

Ex 34: Moses on Sinai

Dan 3: *to you glory and praise for evermore*

2Cor 13: *grace of Lord Jesus Christ, love of God, fellowship of the Holy Spirit*

Jn 3: *God loves the world so much that He gave His only Son*

Our three very short readings today sum up for us the sublime mystery that is at the heart of our Christian faith. We can express that mystery very easily: God is “three persons in one God.” Easy to say, harder to get one’s head round, and yet essential to the understanding of God that we have as Christians.

You will sometimes hear the opinion offered that “all religions are the same ... there’s only one God.” Well, half of that phrase is correct — “there is only one God” — yes, that’s true: of course there can be only one God; any other god than the one almighty Creator God would not make sense. But just because there’s one God doesn’t somehow make all religions the same, or equally true; why would it? For a start, there being only One True God immediately rules out as having the fullness of truth any of those pagan, or ancient tribal, religions, that propose or worship many gods. Hinduism in its many forms, and other ancient eastern religions, including such practices as

tai chi, reiki, yoga etc., which draw on these pagan religious philosophies, are not at all compatible with the Catholic faith, which understands God to be truly personal, loving, and quite different from His creation. We should be very wary indeed of the creeping practices of eastern mysticism and New Age occult beliefs such as in crystals and spiritualism (communing with the dead), which unfortunately are on the increase. We must hold firm instead only to Christian principles of prayer and worship.

Whilst such ‘religions’ are definitely far from being “the same” as our Christian faith, it is true too of Judaism and Islam, even though along with ourselves they worship the one God. Judaism, of course, is the preparation for Christianity — God’s plan throughout the Old Testament to prepare a people who would be ready for the Messiah. Islam only came into existence in the 7<sup>th</sup> c. AD, and it seems to have arisen as a Christian heresy: among the things which Islam chose to repudiate was the settled Christian understanding of the Holy Trinity, God as Three in One.

This brings us back to today’s feast. Trinity Sunday

reminds us of the distinctiveness of Christianity. It is not just one religion amongst many, but is the expression of the truth about God Himself. Jesus reveals Himself as the Son, and Jesus promises — and then sends — the Holy Spirit from the Father. Nothing could be more clear from the ministry of Our Lord, and the pages of the New Testament writers. Only in ignorance or confusion could one conclude that “all religions are the same.” It’s simply not true. This is not designed to stir up tensions, of course, but to adhere to the truth. Moments such as last Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, when the Pope drew together the Presidents of Israel and Palestine — a Jew and a Moslem — are moments of great joy, promising that some peace can be wrought, but this does not happen at the expense of the truth. At no point in last Sunday’s meeting did the Pope try to express an equality of the Catholic faith with Judaism and Islam. He simply invited, as Vicar of Christ the Prince of Peace, these two nations whose warring has been an open wound in the world for decades, to come and be in peaceful prayer for an hour in the Vatican Gardens.

On this first Sunday after the Easter season, as we continue to bask in the joy of Easter and the power of Pentecost, we want to affirm our strong belief in God the Holy, Almighty, and Blessed Trinity. This doctrine is not some dry teaching unconnected with our daily life as Catholics: it is, in fact, the very heart of everything we believe and do. Today’s Gospel sums up the love that makes the world go round — the love that made the world and which saved the world: *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.* The Father sent the Son; and to complete His mission He sent the Spirit into our hearts as Christians so that we can be faithful, strong and pure. It means everything to us that Jesus is God Himself, who has taken our flesh; it means everything to us that the Holy Spirit, God Himself, comes to dwell in our hearts through the Sacraments. Let us adore the Trinity in our lives, the One God, who is Love itself. Let us give our lives in love, in return, as a gift to Him.