

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

HOMILY FOR TRINITY SUNDAY (C) 30th MAY 2010

It is a distinctive feature of the Catholic faith that we call our God Father, Son and Holy Spirit as if there were three Gods, but our creed insists that God is one God.

It has always been a challenge for the preacher on this feast of the Holy Trinity to try to explain this enigma.

The most accessible starting points are Scripture and our own experience of God.

Let's start with Scripture.

Our gospel is a short extract from St. John's in which Jesus speaks to his disciples after the Last Supper to prepare them for his departure.

Jesus tells them that he has many things to say to them but the disciples cannot take any more teaching now. They are like students who have done too much revision for their exams.

Sadly Jesus cannot speak to them directly again so he promises them the Holy Spirit who will tell them everything that he would have told them, the complete truth.

The Holy Spirit will speak the mind of Jesus but will not be Jesus.

Whenever we learn anything about God it is through the Holy Spirit.

Towards the end of the reading Jesus tells his disciples that everything the Holy Spirit tells them "will be taken from what is mine" and goes on to say "Everything the Father has is mine", so Jesus is distinct from the God the Father too.

The complete truth that Jesus promised comes to us from God the Father through Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, but it is complete truth, so Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one truth, one God.

This was the only way that Jesus could explain who he is.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, has to use the same terms.

He tells us that we are at peace with God the Father through our faith in our Lord Jesus.

We cannot be at peace directly with God the Father without Jesus' mediation.

There is a distinction between God and Jesus but Jesus was God.

When Paul reassures the Roman Christians that their sufferings are something to boast about, or rejoice in, he tells them that their sufferings bring patience, patience brings perseverance and perseverance brings hope.

Again we can think of students preparing for exams. Learning is hard for some of them but they work patiently and as they persevere they gain hope that they will succeed, and hope reassures them.

In the same way Paul encourages Christians to persevere, and in order to reassure them that their hope is not deceptive he says that the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Paul's experience could be expressed only in terms of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is as if Paul experienced the one God in three different ways.

If we were to analyse our own experience of God we might find the same.

We experience God as infinite, almighty, unknowable; the Father

Jesus, the Son, made him known but we cannot see or hear him physically.

So when we experience the love of God we are experiencing God as Holy Spirit interacting with our Spirit. It is all the same love, the same God.

This is what makes God one God, the same love expressed in three distinct ways as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is one love that unites the Trinity.

The same love could and should unite us just as it unites the Holy Trinity.

We are an infinite variety of people but we have put our faith in the same love and the same love inspires us.

Whatever threatens to divide us can and must be overcome by our unity in the same love, the same God.

The love that unites our God must unite us, his people.

Let's pray that God will pour his love into our souls; the love of God the Father, lived by the Son and poured out on us by the Holy Spirit.

Rev Geoff Carey