

## **OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH**

### **HOMILY FOR TRINITY SUNDAY (B)**

**3<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2012**

I ask you to bear in mind something Richard Rohr (a Franciscan priest from New Mexico) taught, “You can’t think union; you have to experience it”.

What do we mean when we talk about the Trinity when the Bible insists there is only one God? How can we talk of God being three persons yet only one God?

St Paul often ends his letters with “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”. (St Athanasius explains that just as grace is given from the Father through the Son, so within us the fellowship in the gift cannot be brought about except in the Holy Spirit. If we have received the Spirit, then we have the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Spirit himself).

I’m not going to give a deep theological answer; I shall simply highlight some truths and relate them our experiences, in particular I hope in some way to link the Trinity to the question of our individual churches becoming one parish.

The church fathers and mothers (who are they?) had to deal with these facts: God is one; as it says in Deut 6.4 “The Lord our God, the Lord is one”. Jesus is God; Jesus and the Father are not the same; and then that the Holy Spirit is also God and he is not the same as either the Father or the Son! Confused? So were they! You may, or not, have noticed that the three Sundays around the end of Eastertide are Pentecost, Trinity, and Corpus Christi. So last week we celebrated the Holy Spirit, next week the Body of Christ, and this week all three in one, the Trinity.

It was Tertullian who coined the phrase the Trinity around AD 200 (for anyone interested he was the founder of Western theology, from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa), although it wasn’t until The Council of Nicaea in 325 that the term was defined. This relied on the ability of Greek philosophy to separate being (substance) from person. Remember God’s answer when Moses asked for his name. Simply “I am” – not a definition of a person but a recognition of “being”. And so, trying to put this into words we might understand a little, in Constantinople in 381 the Nicene Creed (that we still say) was officially declared. Three persons, but only one substance. The ultimate union.

Now, sometimes people refer to the Father as Creator, Jesus as Saviour, the Holy Spirit as Healer and Inspirer or Comforter. (For reflection – by being Father, Son and Spirit God is accessible to

each of us in whichever way we need, since most of us may find it easier to relate to one or other of the “Persons” of the Trinity). But this is trying to use human concepts and in considering the Trinity we do well to learn from St Augustine. At its core, this teaching – three persons in one “being/substance” is a mystery. God is. Just that, God is. Have you ever thought of the “isness” of God? (and of ourselves. What or who am I? What makes me me? I believe, and contemplatives teach this, that I can’t find me until I look outside of myself, so I find myself in the being who is.....i.e. God) Any human explanation cannot come to terms with a divine reality that is beyond us, so let’s accept the wonder of it and look at where it points us (which is community).

Our God, the Christian God, is not a remote God watching us critically from heaven. See how in the first reading he enters into a close loving relationship with his people, Israel. Then in the reading from Romans this goes deeper. The Spirit inspires us to cry out “Abba” / “Daddy”. Whatever experience you may have had of a father and family this is not a term we use for a frightening father. It’s one we use when we know this father will hug us; hold us wrapped in loving arms. We are not just a people; we are a special part of the family. We are God’s children; we can inherit heaven because of Jesus. And in the Gospel Jesus promises he is always with us. We are family.

Have you noticed that in Genesis we read “God said, let **us** make man in **our** image..... so in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them”. God is a community (us/our) with intimate loving and sharing. It must be important, it’s right at the start of the bible! So, we are not meant to be in isolation. We are created in God’s image, God is love in perfect union. So, we must mirror this, we must be in union with each other in a relationship of love.

To come back to our imperfect/clumsy analogy of the Trinity with three persons but one substance, this means there can be differences; which will enrich the community; but there must not be any divisions. (See also St Paul especially Corinthians, Ephesians 4,5,6, Colossians 3).

This is such an important point for us at this moment in the history of our parish. We are now the parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea. We owe it to ourselves, each other and to God to be united. Whatever individually we may think..... We have to be community. This can be difficult when there are a few hundred of us so we will need to develop small communities within our parish. Many already exist, but there may be some people here who simply come to Church on Sunday and do their “duty” according to the rules. That’s not bad, but it is missing out on responding to God’s command of love. In a way it’s not recognising what it means to be made in God’s image.

Indeed we can look at John’s Gospel if we need a description of the ideal community. (John 17.21) “May they all be one as you Father are in me and I am in you. May they be one in us. So

the world may believe that you have sent me”. Jesus is praying that we will be united in the depth of unity that exists in the Trinity. That’s a tough call!

So, the challenge is that we need to be part of smaller “communities” where we develop true friendship. We have to meet socially, support each other spiritually, (and even be accountable to each other). We need to treat each other as equals, and this will require that we participate, that we take responsibility for something within that group. Everyone is important, and everyone benefits a group in some way by whatever help – small or large – they give. We will then share our love within these “communities” and celebrate even more fully with God when we all come together at Mass.

We are a complete mix of personalities and preferences, so we may not achieve the ideal. But since Jesus himself prays that we will be one, then we know that with his grace it is possible. Community is not an optional extra. It is of the essence of Christianity.

So, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”.

**Rev Jonathan de Kretser**