**The Most Holy Trinity (Year C)**

**Sunday 12th June 2022**

**Reading I: Proverbs 8:22-31**

Jesus and his twelve companions came from a small blinkered Jewish world. After his life-time an increasing number of converts came from the surrounding multi-cultural Hellenistic world. It was as if an ancient object had light cast upon it from a new direction. This was true with many words and ideas. Translators then were not as precise as modern ones in finding the closest meanings and frequently the Greek idea would extend the Hebrew idea into new areas such as ‘ambrosia’ for ‘manna’.

Typical of this was the subject of Wisdom. The Jews were not philosophers and to them Wisdom was functional. It could mean an artisan, skilled at metalwork, needlework, carpentry etc. It could also mean an intellectual worker such as a Royal counsellor, astrologer, magician, writer, teacher etc.

Unique in the ancient world, Jews were rigid monotheists. Gentiles came from a polytheistic world, and the dialogue between the two cultures lasted until Constantine brought pressure on the Church to make up its mind as to what to believe at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.

The Greeks came from a philosophical tradition and unlike the Jews were familiar with abstract ideas of which Wisdom was one example. Wisdom for them was an emanation from God who thereby reveals his nature to humanity.

Since the Exile many Jews in the Dispersion had lived under Greek influence, and among them wisdom came to be identified with God's revelation of his own personality. To-day’s reading from Proverbs 8 is an early example of this idea. Wisdom is personified as an agent of creation.

As time passed, the personification became more defined and later writings, such as Sirach 24:1-24 and Wisdom 7:22-8:1 speak of Wisdom as a female counterpart to God. This was inoffensive to Hellenistic Jews but blasphemous to the traditional school.

In its later development wisdom acquires a subjective role in human existence, becoming the spark of human religious experience. In this way wisdom becomes the predecessor of both the Logos and the Holy Spirit. Thus, we may understand this passage as a step on the road to the doctrine of the Trinity.

**Responsorial Psalm: 8:3-8**

Technically, a myth is a story which contains some theological truth. The Creation story in Genesis 1 is typical and this psalm renders it in poetic form. We use it on Trinity Sunday because of the Christian association of the Logos and the Spirit of God in that prehistoric epoch.

**Reading II: Romans 5:1-5**

Paul wrote to the Church in Rome before his proposed visit there, to establish his credentials as a senior member of the Church. Amongst many competing voices he wished to be accepted as an orthodox leader. This is one of the few passages in his writings in which the three persons of the Trinity are mentioned with equal weight.

God is the instigator of our reconciliation with him. The Church is the collection of people who have been reconciled. It is through Jesus Christ that this reconciliation has been obtained but it is through the Holy Spirit that the Church comes to experience the reconciliation.

There are three key words in this passage that are commonly misused in modern English. Faith (Pistis) does not mean ‘what we believe’ as in doctrine, but ‘trust’ as in a person, i.e. Jesus Christ.

Hope (Elpis) does not mean ‘long for’ but ‘anticipate with confidence’ Hope is the antonym of hopeless. Hope is so sure that we can 'boast' of sufferings, because suffering reminds us of our reliance on God. That awareness will enable us to endure, to continue despite the odds; endurance can produce character or the power to resist evil, and character breeds hope.

But it is ‘grace’ (Charis) that is the most misunderstood. We frequently use the word as if it is a commodity like water that can be measured or dispensed like medicine. In fact, like the other two, it is a spiritual word, meaning an attitude, such as the attitude God has towards us, or as Mary had towards God. The 'state of grace' of the third line is to have a fellowship with God which, in turn, gives rise to the hope of sharing his glory.

The whole salvation process rests on God's certain love. The central place of the Spirit in Christian life firmly emerges. The affirmation that 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us' (v. 5), asserts not only that the Spirit is a gift but stands as a witness to the outpouring of divine love. In the Spirit we can recognize God's love for us.

**Gospel: John 16:12-15**

There is a story of a son of a wealthy Maharajah Indian coming to school at Harrow. The headmaster asked his escort how he should be addressed. The escort, in embarrassment, said that at Court he was known as the Son of God. “That is no problem” said the head, “we are used to well-connected families here”

We may sometimes wonder as to how we should address Jesus should we find him in a queue in Tesco’s. What would be a suitable subject to talk about? Would it be correct to start a conversation at all? Should we treat him as we would a member of the Royal Family?

We make a mistake if we think that the Apostles or relatives and neighbours of Jesus treated him with the deference we feel we would be obliged to show. His contemporaries had none of the historical reflection that we take for granted. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not explicitly laid out in the New Testament but evolved over two hundred years. Yet, everything that we have come to believe about the Trinity is justified by one passage or another in the New Testament.

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| Proposition | Typical Evidence |
| There is one God | Mark 12;29 |
| The Father is God | 1 Corinthians 8;6 |
| The Son is God | John 1;1 |
| The Holy Spirit is God | Mark 3;29 |
| The three are separate | John 14;26 |
| The Father is personal | John 15;9 |
| The Son is personal | Mark 14;62 |
| The Holy Spirit is personal | Romans 8;26 |
| The three are one | Matthew 28;19 |

Unlike continental Christianity, Trinity Sunday blossomed in England during the Middle Ages because Thomas Becket had been consecrated on this feast in 1162 and his martyrdom turned it into a popular festival. It and Corpus Christi are the only feasts which celebrate doctrines rather than historical events. But they both draw out the implications of events that were historical.

Trinity Sunday is the consequence of the event of Pentecost. So, Corpus Christi is the consequence of the event of the Last Supper. On these two weeks, the two subjects unite. We read this passage to-day because on that occasion Jesus mentions the Spirit of truth and the Father close together. Here again the doctrine of the Trinity is implicit rather than thought through, even by the author. Next week it is the turn of Corpus Christi.

The revelation that Jesus Christ brings is from the Father, and it is the function of the Spirit to make that revelation meaningful to each succeeding Christian generation. The Spirit does not convey new, independent revelation ("he will not speak on his own authority") but constantly updates our understanding. of the once-for-all presence of God in the Christ-event.

In the farewell discourses of the Fourth Gospel (chapters 14-16) we have five passages in which the Holy Spirit appears as 'the Paraclete or, in the last of them (our reading), under the synonymous title of 'the Spirit of Truth.' The Spirit of Truth carries on in the church the work of Christ after Christ himself has departed to the Father.

He differs from Jesus in not being visible; his presence is sensed through the life of the disciples (14:16-17). All that the disciples understand comes from his teaching. (14:25-26) Jesus had earlier told them: 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now'

Only after his crucifixion could his disciples understand the things he had said and done before it and this is the work of the Spirit. (16:12-14)