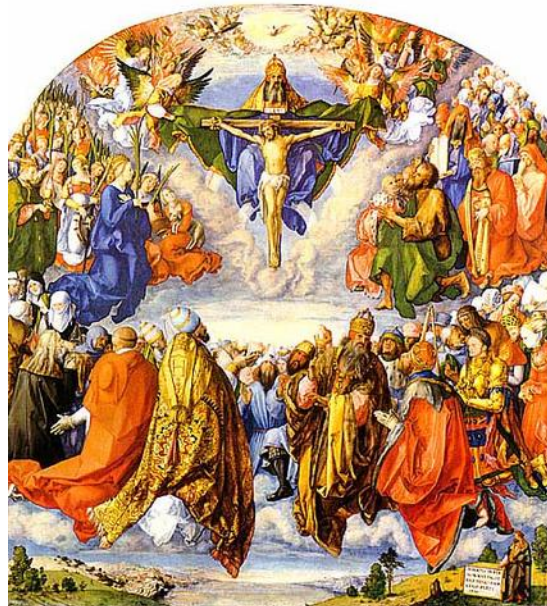


Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Trinity: Three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each of them fully and equally God, yet there are not three Gods but one. People over the centuries have wrecked their brains on how exactly this works, with varying degrees of success, never really getting to the bottom of it completely. A saying goes that he who tries to deny the doctrine of the Trinity is in danger of loosing his faith, and he who tries to understand it is in danger of loosing his sanity.

If we expected today's readings to give us a clear and elaborate presentation of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, we have found out that they simply do not. The doctrine of three persons in one God, equal in divinity yet distinct in personality, is not explicitly spelt out in the Bible. In fact the very word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible at all. Early Christians arrived at the doctrine when they applied their God-given reason to the revelation which they had received in faith. Jesus spoke about the Father who sent him (the Son), and about the Holy Spirit whom he was going to send. He said that the Father had given him (the Son) all that he has, and that he in turn has given to the Holy Spirit all that he has received from the Father. In this we see the unity of purpose among the three persons of the Trinity. All three are –and have been and always will be– intimately involved with humankind. In the story of salvation we usually attribute creation to the Father, redemption to the Son and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, though they are distinct as persons, neither the Father nor the Son nor the Holy Spirit ever exists or acts in isolation from the other two persons of the Godhead, which is so beautifully expressed in a painting by the German Renaissance painter Albrecht Durer (1471-1528). It shows Jesus dying for us on the cross, and the cross itself is upheld by the Father, whilst the Holy Spirit can be seen in the form of a dove at the very top.



It took centuries of arguing and thinking to develop the doctrine of the Trinity, and over the years various heresies relating to aspects of the Trinity threatened to split the church, e.g.: Was Jesus truly God, or just some very special human being? Or was he fully divine, but not actually human? There may be some who might say: “Does all this matter?” Well, it does because we are made in the image of God. Therefore, the more we understand God, the more we understand ourselves. Experts in religion tell us that people always try to be like the god they worship. People who worship a warrior god tend to be warmongering, people who worship a god of pleasure tend to be pleasure-seeking, people who worship a god of wrath tend to be vengeful, and people who worship a god of love tend to be loving. Like the god, so the worshippers. Therefore, the more important question for us to ask today is:

What does the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity tell us about the kind of God we worship and what does this say about the kind of people we should be?

The entrance antiphon for today’s Mass reads:

Blest be God the Father, and the Only Begotten Son of God and also the Holy Spirit, for he has shown us his merciful love.

And that is what our God does: he loves us and takes care of us. He always has (just look at salvation history) and always will. Our Jewish brothers and sisters knew that God was involved in their lives and took notice of their prayers, but as Christians we are especially blessed because we know Jesus is God made flesh. If we know Him, we know the Father. Only if He is truly God AND truly human can He achieve our redemption. Only by God becoming human can humans become one with God and be adopted as his children in baptism. Because of Jesus we really do see how much our heavenly Father, Abba, cares for us. God is no longer loving us from heaven, in Jesus God is loving us in a human like us. As our Gospel today says “*God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son...*” (John 3:16)) In Jesus, God is Immanuel. In Jesus, God is really *With Us*. Jesus is our brother. Paul sums up the implications very well, “*If God is on our side, who can be against us?*” (Rom 8:31) and also “*Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked....Nothing can come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Rom 8:35) These are the kind of words we need to hear at a difficult time like now, when lots of people are worried about what is going to happen. In our troubles and worries we are invited to turn to the Father through Jesus in the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus ascended he promised the Holy Spirit would come as our defence lawyer and consoler, and that is what we celebrated last Sunday. The Holy Spirit remains to the end of time to

help and support us. Such is our God, and we are made in His image and likeness. Just as God is God in a loving Trinitarian relationship, so we can be fully human only in a relationship of partners based on love. The self needs to be in a horizontal relationship with others, and a vertical relationship with God. In that way our life

becomes Trinitarian like that of God: ✚

In times like now, this can be a bit more of a challenge, but we can think of novel ways of keeping our relationship with others going, of showing our love and care, and I am aware of lots of people doing this by ringing, texting, zooming, calling at the door or doing some shopping for those isolating etc. Acts of loving and kindness abound. Togetherness has never be as vital as in a time of isolation and social distancing, but I know that, as a community, we are rising to the challenge. The doctrine of the Trinity tells us that, because of the Father, Son and Spirit working together to bring about our salvation, we are no longer strangers and outsiders, but God's beloved children, part of His very own family. In Him we live, and move and have our being, and we are invited to share in the very life of the Trinity, as depicted in Rublev's famous icon, where we see the Trinity at a table set for a meal, and noticeably there is an empty place at the front: For YOU and me.

When we are at Mass, we already have a place at the earthly banquet, but we are also invited to the Feast of Eternal Life in heaven with God and all the Saints. Seeing that God is a God of Love, who will never abandon us, our only response can be of trust in Him and love for one another. What St Paul said to the Corinthians is also meant for us: *Help one another. Be united; live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.* (2 Cor 13:11)

And also don't forget St Peter's advice: *"unload all your burden on to Him, since he is concerned about you"*. (1 Pet 5: 7)

Every blessing to you and yours

Deacon Jurgen



