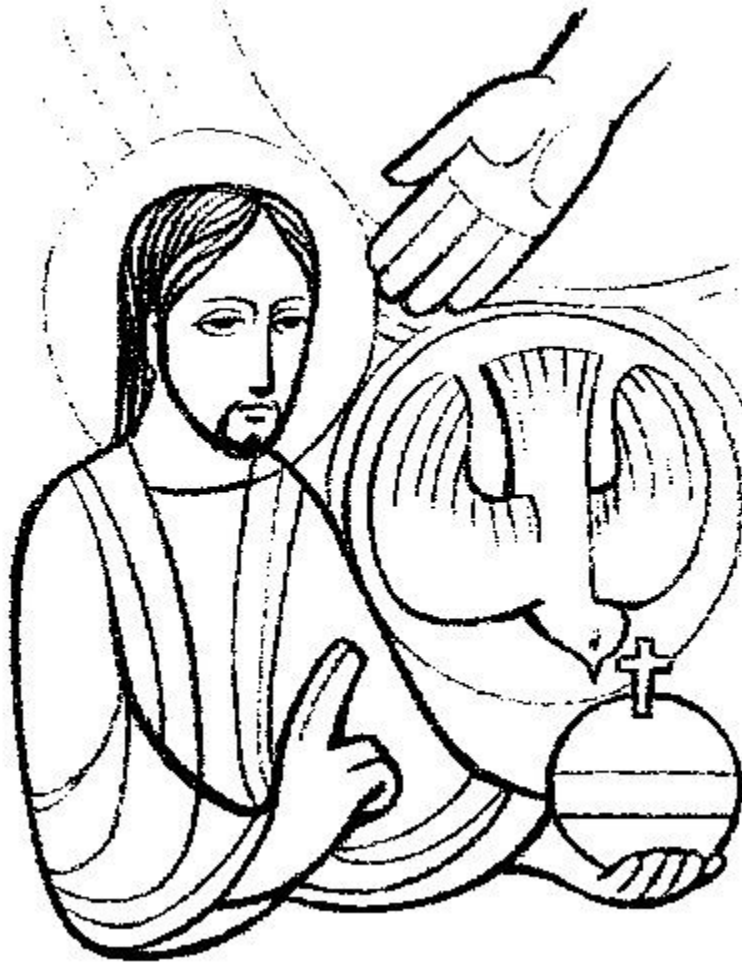


# About the Trinity



## Wellsprings of Faith

**Note:**

*In the commentary the divine name is represented as 'YHWH'. That is unpronounceable! If we want to use the divine name it is important to be aware of the Hebrew practice of not pronouncing the divine name but of using "God" (Elohim) or more often "Adonai" (My LORD). When the Hebrews translated their scriptures from the original language into Greek they never wrote down the name "YaHWeH" but rendered it by "Kyrios" (LORD). Such was the trouble they took to avoid the suggestion that by naming the "Holy One" they had some kind of power to contain God's reality in the naming process. In the text and comments we follow the practice of the New Jerusalem translators but signify the divine name simply by "YHWH".*

# Wellsprings of Faith

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no.1

ON THE TRINITY

7<sup>th</sup> June 2009

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*God as Trinity is at the centre of the mystery of Christian faith. Yet the more we try to speak of this mystery, the more complex it often seems to become. What is simple, that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, seems more and more complex. Our language limits us. One possible response to this apparent complexity and contradiction is to reject all belief in God as Trinity. Why should we not be like Muslims and Jews and simply believe in the one true God?*

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## **Introduction:**

Such disbelief in the Trinity might seem to be more logical but it is definitely not being true to the Scriptures and not being true to the faith of the eleven disciples who worshipped Jesus, as John tells us that Thomas did. Their meetings with the Risen Christ and worshipping Him as God, transformed their understanding of God. As Catholics we try to value and respect the integrity of that faith, rather than jettison the bits that we don't like; can't understand; or are simply intellectually unfashionable.

Christianity doesn't always make complete sense. There are parts of the mystery that we can't understand yet. But we live it. Our lives, as the lives of those who are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, are lives of faith, hope and love. Our lives become, in a profound way, part of the divine life itself!

We who have been made in the image and likeness of God, now start to live in God! We have faith in the Risen Christ who died for our salvation. Jesus said, "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." So in this reflection on the Trinity, we will first look at today's Scriptures and make some comments about them, before offering some points for discussion and prayer.

## **The Readings for Trinity Sunday (Year B)**

The central theme in the gospel of Matthew is discipleship – and it implies that proclaiming the gospel leads to transforming listeners into followers of Jesus!! People are to take Jesus' teaching as the guideline of their lives. The disciples are sent to proclaim the gospel and to baptise, "in the name of the Father; and of the Son; and of the holy Spirit." Their

mission is, "to make disciples" and their sending begins in provincial Galilee - a place despised by the proud inhabitants of the "super-city" Jerusalem! The sending occurs on a mountain - the traditional place of an important revelation in the Bible and in His words of missioning, Jesus' power to serve is evoked - rather than the power to dominate!

#### **Deuteronomy 4 : 32 – 34, 39 – 40**

The question for Hebrew believers is the link between the mystery of YHWH God and the practice of obedience. The mystery of God always stands beyond human experiencing whereas the concrete practice of obedience must be carried out daily! Central to the report of the meeting at Mt. Horeb or Sinai, is the invisible freedom of God! Moses invites the people to search through the history of other peoples' relationships to their gods. YHWH God alone, made an ownership claim on the Hebrews in awesome fire and in speech. Only a voice was heard. The invisible God is heard in commandment. God's nearness is in the speech, "from the heart of the fire." It is a summons to obedience & linked to a promise of land & destiny!

Possessing the 'land of promise' becomes the mark of the Hebrews. Their place is secured by an radical obedience to the Word or command of the holy One. God is close in the events of Hebrew history. God hears them and speaks a new creative word or command. But this familiarity with the voice, brings with it an uncompromising and demanding obedience to the holy One's command. This is the focus at Mt. Horeb. No visible form. Rather, a command! The Hebrews knew enough to get on with the work to which they have been called. The nearness of YHWH God lets a people live without knowing - that is, with trust!!

#### **Romans 8 : 14 -17**

The first Christian writers, rather than speculate on the nature of the Trinity, show how the apostles focus on the Trinity's action in the life of believers. To describe the holy Spirit's role, the apostle to the Gentiles, uses the theme of believers' participation in God's family. The Spirit's presence is the mark of a person's relationship to God. The Spirit offers full adoption as children of the heavenly One. It is adoption with full household privileges including the boldness of family membership (v.15). The Spirit's support enables the adopted ones to call God "Abba" (vv.15-16) and entitles them to share Jesus' glory (v.17b).

The Spirit's power takes "aliens", "rebels" and "slaves" and plants them permanently in the household of God. There they enjoy all the privileges of the chief heir, Jesus (17a). The Spirit's work goes on in service to the work of the Creator and Jesus the Redeemer, as well as in support of believers. Paul's intention is to describe the holy Spirit's work - not to make

"spiritualists" of his listeners or readers! According to the apostle the Spirit's work is to graft believers into God's family where they share the tasks and the rewards of Jesus.

### **Matthew 28 : 16 - 20**

The women responding to the angel's instruction, bring news to the male disciples of the empty tomb and the message that Jesus has risen and is to be found in Galilee. The message, "Go to Galilee to find Jesus" must have been like an order to us to "Go to the businessmen's association; or go to the trades union meeting; or go to the unemployed worker's meeting; and "You will see Me there!" Jesus is in Wellsford!

The disciples seem to have put "Jesus resurrected" in heaven - in the great blue beyond! So the Earth will go right on being the same! And there will still be injustice, despair, hopelessness and poverty! But the gospel account affirms that Jesus rose - to be here on Earth; "He has risen from the dead and now He is going before you to Galilee." (v.7)

Jesus came up and spoke to the disciples (v.19). The words of invitation are for them to come into partnership with Him in His own mission - they are the words of sending, "into the world." The women are first sent - and now these disciples are to, "go and tell" by baptising, "into the name of the Trinity." This mission contradicts those prophets of doom who lament that the world is past mending!! The gospel affirms that Jesus came to mend the world! The disciples extend Jesus' task of mending the world.

The politics of the Bible is a "communion" of all with everything held in common! That is - to live in all our relationships, a partnership animated by absolute equality of love that exists between Jesus and God the Father! For this we need a new birth! St. Paul exhorts us to throw off the old ways and clothe ourselves in the new! According to St. Paul, there is to be no distinction between Hebrew and non-Hebrew; master and slave; male and female! Where there is this spirit / Spirit - that's heaven! Where no division, selfishness or deceit exist - that's eternal life!

The God that Jesus presents is not "up-there-in-heaven" but in a creative, liberating and supporting partnership with people. If we want to find the Trinitarian God that is where we must look - in the creative, liberating and helping practices of people! Like Moses reminding the ancient Hebrews - that the invisible God was heard in the speech of command; so for the Christian today, the same link holds.

## Reflection

The doctrine of the Trinity can bring together two important strands in our lives – the world of faith and the world of work. If we look up the word, “work” in the dictionary, we find these words – 'work'; 'to work'; and “working.” We can see a direct relationship between these words and the doctrine of the Trinity. The Father = the Work (the conception, the idea); the Son = To Work (the action: the expression of the idea); the Holy Spirit = Working (the extension and development of both the idea and its expression). These are basic words in industry and in the provision of services – the plan; the doing of the plan; and evaluating what is done! If our instinct is to put people first in industry and commerce then we have to treat people right and for that to happen we have to get the structures right.

For this we need to consider what makes work, 'whole', 'complete', 'efficacious' rather than what makes work efficient (though this is not irrelevant). But what does make work useful and creative while recognising that there will always be some work that can only be termed 'bad' work - work which degrades humanity and cannot ever be seen in 'whole' terms. In structuring industrial production and the provision of services there are the three fundamental activities: making; selling; and development. These are primary functions which have to be supported by a whole number of supporting functions (personnel, accounting, safety etc..). The most essential thing in any industry or service provision, is 'the transformations.' That's the point at which substantial change takes place. For example - when workers take the raw material of Nature and turn it - transform it - into something different! When we identify these points of substantial transformation it is possible to show how work should be structured round these transformations by groups of workers, numbering somewhere between 4 and 20 (the number shown by various studies to be the best for achievement and involvement).

Production systems and service provision around these basic transformations can be structured to form, 'whole' tasks for a primary work group (of between 4 and 20 people). Each group led by a designated leader/supervisor and the team together should as far as possible be able to plan and organise the work within the group with each workplace able to evaluate its performance against agreed standards, giving all work-group members the opportunity to participate formally in the common task.

In other words, work organised so a supervised, cohesive, primary work-group surrounds those basic transformations in the manufacturing process or in the provision of services. In this way psychological ownership of work and dignity and respectability to the worker can emerge. This structuring comes from the bottom-up, rather than from the top-down.

This alternative to the traditional Protestant work ethic makes our work of the substance, because it is in fact of the substance of God's Self!

Thus work becomes is not a merely human activity; it becomes a divine activity!! Therefore, when we work we can be simply doing what God does. This is our being made in the image of God. So unemployment is a scandal because it denies us the opportunity to be God's son or daughter. An equal scandal is for work to be structured in such a way that our work has no wholeness or meaning. Work has to be structured to make it purposeful - as God's own work is purposeful! This is our basic right as workers – to Plan; to Do; to Develop – as basic to us – as the Father; the Son; and the Holy Spirit, are basic to the nature of God!

The Creeds therefore, especially the Athenasian Creed, are not some ancient irrelevancy. They are in fact, rich with relevance to our life and work. The Crucifixion of Jesus is not something to be thought of only in terms of something which happened to Him. Crucifixion and Resurrection are continuing features of the world. They are to be identified with “substantial change” and therefore, with transformation!

### **Items for Sharing**

- The Christian community is the revelation in the world, of the tenderness and the compassion of God. Discuss in light of the first reading.
- Love presupposes a vision of oneself and the other in one's self. Love reproduces one's own features in another - and another's in oneself! Long-married couples sometimes are said to end up physically resembling one another. Comment on this interpretation of the second reading.
- Christians become courageous in their mission to the world only when they know equally well; the creative love of the Father; the redeeming grace of the Son; and the supportive power of the holy Spirit. What does this mean? And is it true, in the light of today's gospel reading?
- We speak of God's action-in-the-world as the mystery of the Trinity. We are invited to come into partnership in planning; doing; and developing the divine “economy.” The Triune God is the steward, or house-hold manager, of all creation - and has called us disciples to care; renew; and liberate Nature; nations; and individual people from the false economics of oppressive power structures. So eternal life is something experienced, 'here and now' - Comment.

## Prayer

Creator, Redeemer, Empowerer;  
we praise You and give You glory.  
We bless You for calling us  
to be Your holy people.  
Remain in our hearts  
and guide us in Your love and service.  
Help us to let our light shine before others  
and lead us to the way of faith.  
Holy Trinity of love  
we praise You now and always. Amen.

## Review:

The Trinity defines life in Christian community. Jesus offered the invitation to would-be disciples to come into partnership to extend the divine work. Working for the reigning of God means our continuing God's creating; redeeming; and life-giving activity, "in the world."

The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be simply read off the pages of Scripture. The perception and experience which has resulted in the formulation of the doctrine, has not been simply a matter of logical inferences from certain Scriptural texts. The development has occurred within a complex matrix of experience and reflection. And that reflection on our experience of faith; worship; and mission, continues to evolve.

Contemporary attitudes to work as a human activity can dismiss work as having no meaning beyond the activity itself. But where human work is complete and where the worker shares in the planning; making; and evaluating functions – then it can be affirmed that human work shares in the characteristics of God's own work! Its an argument that work and services should be structured in ways that make work purposeful as God's own work is purposeful.

## The Doctrine of the Trinity

(the plan)

**The Work**

**human work**

**To Work**

(making & marketing)

**Working**

(development of plan & extending it)

**Redeemer**

(doing the plan)

(the plan)

**Creator**

**divine work**

**Life-giver**

(developing & extending the plan)