

Year B Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6: 1-8. Romans 8: 12-17. John 3: 1-17

Oh, what fun, a chance to preach on the holy mystery of the Trinity. And we have Thomas Becket to blame for having a special Sunday to celebrate the Holy Trinity. He was ordained Bishop on the Sunday after Pentecost in 1162 and decided to mark it in the English church as a day to honour the Trinity. And here we are 960 years later, continuing to honour the Trinity, so I think is likely to stay in the Calendar, don't you?

And it is wholly appropriate that the Trinity is celebrated immediately after Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit is such a dominant presence, animating and giving new life to so many believers.

The Lectionary readings today are an interesting choice. In various ways they speak of faith, of God, of being born and led by the Spirit, of living a different life that clearly marks people out as being Spirit-filled.

You may be relieved to hear that I am not going to rehearse an understanding of the Trinity, using human words and concepts that can never fully explain how our triune God, the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operate. I am comfortable with God being one God, in three persons; not a multi-theistic deity as some assume.

It should not surprise you that what I reflect on is how we, as post-resurrection, and just as importantly, post-Day of Pentecost Christians, live our lives; how we follow the way of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit.

Last week, the reading expressed the Holy Spirit as if it was like tongues of fire. So, as people who acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, how is that 'fire' expressed in our lives? Our baptism with water was done to us, I doubt many of us were old enough to have a say in the matter, and of course, because of our age at baptism we had no deep faith or understanding of its significance. It only takes on a deep significance to us when we make a commitment to know Jesus. It only takes on a deep significance to us when we call upon Jesus and rely upon him. It only takes on a deep significance to us when we strive as best we humanly can, to follow his example and love one another. It only takes on a deep significance to us when we, through our actions, share the Good News of Jesus with others, when we want to serve

others. It only takes on a deep significance to us when we learn how to forgive ourselves for not being as perfect as we would like and learn to forgive others too.

In our post-Pentecost world, I believe we all have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. It is there already, as we are all made in the image of God. We are invited to let the dynamism of the Holy Spirit enliven, excite, energise, and shape us. So, maybe today's task is to re-awaken the flame that maybe no more dynamic than a pilot light just now. God has already given the Spirit to us; for those that want to, we need to acknowledge that need and ask God afresh to turn up the gas.

And how might we know that we are living by the Spirit, doing acts that brings God's kingdom down to earth, bringing glimpses of heaven – of the type of life we could all enjoy – to others? In Luke's gospel (6: 27-36) Jesus speaks plainly about what it means to follow his way, his Father's way. It can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Be compassionate, just the way your Father is compassionate". (Luke 6:36). Jesus had described what that looks like when he said; "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you; pray for those who treat you badly... Treat others the way you want them to treat you."

The Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit guides and lead us, energises us and challenges us to live a hope-filled life, of being able to love as God loves each one of us. I would suggest that if we are animated by the Spirit, we, in our individual ways will have a deep desire to find ways to make the world a better place, more like the vision Jesus talked about and demonstrated through his actions.

It is easy to watch the news – wars, oppression, injustice, climate change, unethical politicians and scandals based on poor governance of institutions – and become apathetic, to not want to get involved at all. It is understandable, but it isn't of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings with it the gift of God's love, God's grace, God's mercy, and an impetus to act in faith and hope.

One of the main themes of John's gospel is the tension between humankind's personal desires and focus on the self on the one hand, and acting in the Spirit doing the will of God, on the other hand. When we act as the Spirit guides us, we move away from our self-centred and individual desires and allow God's desires and aims to be met. It can seem as if we are giving up some of who we

are, but the astonishing thing is that quite often we find out far more about ourselves in that process and grow into a fuller and more complete person, stepping beyond the limits and narrow vision we never knew we had.

In the book, 'A Road Less Travelled' by Scott Peck, he describes the tipping point where someone decides to move beyond their limit of experience and self-control. He acknowledges it is often a time of fear and needs courage to step beyond our normal limits, and in a way hand over some control.

It is similar with the Holy Spirit. In Scripture the Spirit is called a wind, a breath, a dwelling; these are ways of describing God's power, wisdom and presence. And we know that Jesus was experienced by his disciples as having God dwelling within him. We know that God's Spirit conceived Jesus, initiated his public ministry and sustained him in his ministry. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are inseparable.

Trinity Sunday is a time to celebrate the Holy Mystery of the Trinity, and I believe, a time to reflect on God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and to re-commit to being animated and guided by the Spirit, wherever that may take us. I am confident that the Holy Spirit imbues us with a strong sense of hope, impelling us to take action towards a better future for all of God's creation.

How might we use the inspiration of the Trinity dwelling within us to express the hope and love of God as we come into the season of Ordinary time?