

Trinity Sunday
3/06/2007

Mark the Evangelist

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 The Gifts of Wisdom
Psalm 8 God's glory and Man's dignity
Romans 5:1-5 Results of Justification
John 16:12-15 The Work of the Spirit

To God the Father, Love's Pure Light.

To Christ, revealed in earthly night,

To God the Paraclete we raise

Our equal and unceasing praise. *Quae sella sole pulchrior*

Charles Coffin, 1736

Michael Downey, *Altogether Gift: Frontispiece*

Sermon by Elizabeth Brown

Today we celebrate the Holy Trinity. There is mystery as well as reality in our belief in the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. We are always limited by the powers of human perception in our encounters with the ineffable mystery of God and we find a Triune God incredibly baffling - how can three be one or one be three? We can know God through the wonders of creation, in the person and work of Jesus Christ and through our personal encounter with the Spirit of God as one spirit meeting with another. But our belief in the Trinity is more than a record of our experience that we know God in different ways. It also points to a **reality in which we believe**. What in human terms we recognize as **personality and community/relationship** are to be found in God, and provide a model for human relationships.

We worship a Trinitarian God. Earlier we sang the Gloria wherein the Father, then the Son is worshipped and glorified and in the wonderful closing phrase, the Trinity is glorified: 'Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.' In the creeds we acknowledge our Triune God.

In Communion - the Father is addressed in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, we follow the instructions of Jesus and in the epiclesis invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit first on us, the worshipping community and then on the elements of bread and wine. As the Trinity is mysteriously communioned of relationships so our human relationships are enhanced and

strengthened as under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, we share bread and wine. In the sacrament of Baptism, children are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Three in One and the One in Three - the central mystery of the Christian faith beyond our human understanding.

To the parents who are presenting their children for baptism - be warned; they will take you to the boundaries and as they grow, so will you.

The central mystery of the Christian faith! Our Triune God!

Our lack of understanding is not a simple matter of ignorance - rather it is admitting, accepting and embracing our human limits. God is not to be known through the power of our intelligence; but what is to be known of God is to be known in prayer.

The Triune Godhead is of one substance- divinely **God, Truth and Love and all that love implies**. All three persons of the Triune Godhead are equally God, Truth and Love - neither lesser nor greater; but they also are uniquely personal for God is the Father of the Son, the Giver; God is also the Son of the Father, the Given; God is also the Holy Spirit, the Gift of the Father to all people for gifting/being with them in their daily lives. These three separate persons experience within the **Godhead a oneness, an indwelling, an entwining of truth and love beyond our human comprehension**. We get a hint of this divine experience when we observe older people who over a lifetime of love have almost become one person - they instinctively know how the other will think and act; but they are always separate human beings.

Just as our worship reflects our Triune God so must our lives living in relationship with one another, in our loving, supporting, affirming, caring, reflect the One- in three whom we worship. In doing so we must be prepared to accept the suffering, which is part of loving. As the Word made flesh, the human Jesus, **given by God the Father** for the salvation of the world, in loving obedience accepted his journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem/Golgotha, suffered agonizing death on a cross, abandonment by his Father and the giving up of his spirit, which the Father had **given** him at his baptism. In his suffering, he remained a caring person. In John's Gospel, he lovingly made provision for his mother's future, and in Luke, he not only seeks forgiveness for his murderers but also assures the repentant criminal hanging by his side "today you will be in paradise with me". Jesus alone of the Trinity suffered this death experience. One can imagine how God of Love, the Father suffered with his Beloved Son, the Chosen One. Suffering is part of loving relationships. In the book, **I Heard the Owl Call my Name** (p. 132), in a Canadian

Indian parish their young white priest has died. Through his loving service he has so transcended the barrier between White and Indian that the community is laying him to rest in their sacred burial ground. The community is gathering for the funeral procession -

In his tiny house the schoolteacher heard the running
footfalls on the path to the river bank, and he went
Quickly to the door but could not open it. To join the others
was to care, and to care was to live and to suffer.

He was afraid to face the unknown, the mystery of loving human relationships with their concomitant possible suffering, so he chose isolation, which leads to death.

After Jesus' suffering and death came the joy of resurrection, new life in the Spirit and his return to the Father where he sits at his right side - separate but together - the **Given** has returned to the **Giver**. As this **Given Son** was returning, he promised his disciples that they would be **gifted with God the Holy Spirit**.

Real mystery, which ever eludes our efforts to contain it, nevertheless attracts us to fuller participation as in a similar way does the mystery of human love, which is difficult to adequately express in words; but can be reflected in our actions and service. As human persons we find our inner being/ our true selves in loving, caring relationships with others, in walking with them on their life journeys, in sharing their suffering as they share ours, in holding a hand, shedding tears, praying, sharing bread and wine as you did for me just over a year ago, when almost a stranger you gathered me up and nurtured me, reflecting the mystery of Triune love. Thank you!!

I close with a quotation from Michael Downey.

We talk about mystery; but in the end, words must give way to silence, creating a space for self-transcendence and community. The words of grace we have heard are meant to invite our personal communion with others, with every living creature, and with the living God named, "Father, Son, Spirit." The words must now give way to silence. As words are left aside, we enter the space they create. This wide open space is the region of wound and wisdom named "heart." It is in this place, which is not a place at all, where we live in prayerful communion with the living God. Seized by Love's pure light and saturated by Love's outpouring, the eye of the heart beholds the glory of God, three in one Love: Giver, Given, Gift/ing: Love speaking and breathing. Receive the gift.

(from Michael Downey. *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality*, p. 140).