

# Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity Year A

## Readings

Exodus 34:4-6, 8-9

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

John 3:16-18

If there is one thing that scientists have demonstrated in the last ninety years or so it is that the universe is a very strange place. Physicists have been uncovering a world that gets weirder the closer you look. To look into an atom is to enter a ghostly world of particles and forces that behave in peculiar and contradictory ways. JJ Thompson, a renowned scientist in his day, was awarded the 1906 Nobel Prize for proving that there was a particle called an electron. He lived to see his son, George Paget Thompson, win the 1937 Nobel Prize for proving it was also a wave. So, while in the everyday world that we see and touch, particles and waves are two separate things, in the world of the vanishingly small, it seems that things can be both at the same time. Today, if you follow what's going on in the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN), the Large Hadron Collider is cranking back up to life and looking for even more mind-boggling things: dark matter, extra dimensions, new particles not seen before, to enlarge our knowledge of how the world works.

A complex and mysterious place, our world. Today, Trinity Sunday, is the day when we contemplate the mystery and complexity of its Creator. We recite the formulae easily enough: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But what do we mean?

First, we proclaim God is one, and at the same time, three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are distinct from each other: the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father; neither the Father nor the Son is the Holy Spirit. And yet, they are also one God. They are not some divine threesome, living their separate divine lives; they are a unity as well.

But the mystery is not a mathematical mystery. It is not like a divine Rubik's Cube that we have to wrap our head around. It is not an equation to be solved. The mystery is a mystery of God's love. God's love is eternal and it is boundless. He didn't just breathe us into life, so much as love us into life. As the writer of Genesis tells us: his Spirit moved over the waters. His creative activity is an act of love, and it flows from the very heart of who God is. But love cannot exist in isolation; it cannot be without something to love, and so John the Evangelist tells us that 'In the Beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. Later in that same Gospel, Jesus prays 'may they be one, and you and I are one'.

The unity between Father and Son is the unity of love: their love binds them together and yet they retain that which makes them distinct persons. And the love that the Father

has for the Son, and that the Son has for the Father, is a love that flows from their very being: it moved on the face of the waters; it inspired and emboldened the disciples; it guides us to unity and truth; for that love, the love between Father and Son, is the Holy Spirit. When parents have children they too learn that love is not confined to the boundaries of their relationship. It flows outwards into the lives of children and friends, and into their communities. Love becomes Trinitarian as it is opened towards others. Otherwise our love would become narrow, confined, exclusive. So the doctrine of the Trinity is not abstract celestial mathematics. It is the most down to earth practical lesson in the mystery of generous and fruitful love.

Sometimes we speak of the Holy Spirit almost as an it, as if we were talking about a force, like gravity, rather than a person. But no, the Spirit is a person who guides and leads us. The Spirit helps us to pray: when we do not know what to pray, says St Paul, 'the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words'.

If we are tempted to feel that we could never wrap our heads around the doctrine that God is in essence one, and yet three distinct persons, we can console ourselves with this:

First, although God has given us gifts of reason and intelligence, along with the desire to learn and understand, we can only hope in this life to gain the merest glimpse of the infinite depths of God's being. Puzzling reflections in a mirror, as one version of St Paul's words has it. If God were small enough to comprehend, said one writer, he would not be large enough for our needs.

Second, while we may not come even close to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, we can live it in our prayer. We pray to the Father, who created all things. We pray through his Son Jesus Christ, for in Baptism we have been made adopted children of the same heavenly Father. Like Jesus, we can live in joyful intimacy with the Father. We can call him Abba, daddy. In Jesus's death on the Cross, he has reconciled us to the Father, and so we pray through Jesus. We do so because the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us: he dwells in us and we live and pray in the Spirit. So, we pray to the Father, through Christ, and in the Spirit.

The Trinity is the mystery of divine love; and it transforms our own loving. All our everyday ordinary loving is marked with this mystery. It is a love which lifts us into equality, as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal. Its grace frees us from domination and manipulation. It is a fertile love, overflowing beyond itself. It draws us into unity with each other and with God, overthrowing divisions between nations, saints and sinners, the living and the dead. In fulfilling the command which Jesus left us on the night when his own love led him to the Cross, the command to love one another, we are drawing ever closer to the heart of the divine life. We can't hope to understand, but we can hope to live the life of the Trinity. May the love of God the Father, who made all that is, who sent his Son to redeem us from the power of evil, whose Spirit calls us to fellowship and unity, stay with us now and always.

## **Reopening of Church buildings – first indications of what will needed**

The clergy have received the following and I thought it might be helpful to share it with you.

Many of you are concerned that Catholic Churches are not open for Mass or even private prayer but unfortunately at present churches must remain closed by order of the Government. Recently, Cardinal Nichols has become part of a task force discussing the possibility of churches opening ASAP for private prayer although no decision has been made. Those priests who are looking after church buildings need to be prepared to see if it is possible to open churches by following the guidelines that will be laid down. I include here a list of things that need to be considered so that churches may be open for private prayer. Make sure that you consider these issues well before a date is given for opening a church. It is hoped this will happen before the beginning of July, but I fear that we are in the hands of the Government.

Opening will be for limited times each day, or even on certain days of the week.

- In this first step, it will not be for the celebration of Mass or any of the Sacraments, but purely for individual prayer
- It will have to be well supervised and will need a team of volunteers to manage the process who are not in any Covid-19 vulnerable category
- There will need to be the facility for socially distanced queuing to enter the church building
- Hand sanitisation will need to be available on entrance and exit
- The entrance and exit to the church building may need to be by different routes
- The floor and seating space will need to be properly marked out, and social distancing will need to be in force
- Holy Water will not be available and, depending on demand, visits may have to be limited to a certain length
- It may not be possible to visit every part of the church, or to light candles or venerate statues and images
- Those supervising the entrance, exit and interior of the church will need to wear some protective items, such as masks and gloves
- There will need to be cleaning and hygiene regimes in place.
- Risk assessment may need to be carried out before opening can take place
- Churches will need to demonstrate they can put the necessary measures in place.

Clearly precise arrangements will depend on the circumstances of each building. But as you can see, if we are to put all of this into place it will need to be a team effort!

## **Live-streaming of Masses**

I know many of you have been very saddened that we have not been able to live-stream mass from SJV and I have to say that I totally share that sadness and disappointment.

This week I met with a sound/vision tech firm. There is good news and bad news. It is

quite possible to install the equipment needed for live streaming but there are two issues:

1. Our internet is far too slow and we will need to upgrade to fibre-optic.
2. Our sound system is very old and on its last legs (in fact the loop system does not work at all) and will not support the sound quality needed for live broadcast.

What do we do?

If we are to live-stream we will have to put in a fibre-optic line. Also we are going to need to renew our sound system at some point anyway and this might be the time to do it.

But the cost will be about £5,000 and I do not think I can justify spending this money in the present situation. I think we have only two choices. We carry on as we are, do not live-stream, and wait for the sound system to die, or we ask for donations and go ahead with the replacement of the sound system and installation of fibre-optics etc. If we break down the cost it is not too bad:

- A one off donation of £5k
- 5 donations of £1k
- 10 donations of £500.

Let me know what you think!

Fr R