

## The Most Holy Trinity, Year C

Today is Trinity Sunday. The psalm that the Church offers us for our reflection is the beautiful Psalm 8. Gazing at the night sky, the psalmist longs for the wonder, simplicity and innocence of a child so that he might give expression to his overwhelming desire to praise God for what he calls 'the work of God's fingers'. We think of God's finger in Michelangelo's painting of creation. The intricacy and delicacy of the created world causes the Psalmist to be caught up in admiration of God the artist.

We are then invited to ask 'What does it mean to be a human being?' In the light of the vastness of the cosmos, who am I? It is interesting and most instructive that he does not attempt to answer this fundamental question by looking at us, and at what we do. Rather he looks at what God has done and is doing for us. We are all too aware of what we do and fail to do. But the only way to find out who we really are is to look at our relationships, and primarily at our relationship with God. How God treats us will give us the cue as to who we are.

The psalmist is amazed, and invites us to share his amazement, at the fact that God keeps us in mind and cares for us. There is a lot that we take for granted here, but I am sure that each of us has special experiences that we treasure because, perhaps in the midst of pain, we knew that God was looking after us. It is by reflecting on these moments that we come to a deep awareness of who we really are as persons treasured by God and precious to him.

The psalmist reflects on the wonderful dignity that is ours as human beings, but he sees this not as a right but as a gift. It is God who has crowned us with glory and honour. It is God who has given us our parents, our family, our community, and our personal gifts. It is God who has formed our body, our soul, and our heart, and it is God who continues to do so, giving each of us that special beauty that is our unique selves.

The psalmist reflects on our place in creation. We are a little less than the angels, but we have been given the whole of creation to continue the task of bringing order out of chaos and forming the world into a paradise where human beings can live with dignity and where all living things, indeed the whole of the created universe, can be intelligently governed. This is not a right, but a privilege given to us, and we are responsible for the way we carry out this trust. Who then are we to have been so honoured and trusted by God?

We are aware of the Spirit of God breathing love into our lives. This happens in a hundred ways. It happens whenever anyone loves us. We are aware of the fact that something is happening that is bigger than us and beyond us. We are aware of a mysterious love that sustains and envelops us. It touches us at times through our intimate family relationships. It comes to us through kind words spoken. It plays like a gentle breeze in our souls when we read the Scriptures, even when we come here to meet those who share our faith and to listen to the readings and to the responses of our own hearts.

Sometimes God's love-Spirit takes on a definite shape and a definite meaning. Then we talk about God's Word, spoken through other people, through the events of our lives, through the sacred Scriptures and in the liturgy. God does communicate with us, mysteriously but truly and in so many ways. This Word of God speaks to us, as in today's psalm, in the night sky and in the

many ways in which God is mindful of us and cares for us. We believe that this Word that speaks to us through holy men and women and above all through those who love us, was made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. He is God's focal word. He is the one who gives human expression to God's word, he who has and gives God's Spirit of love without reserve.

And yet as we experience God's Spirit and God's Word we are aware of the infinite depths of mystery that lies beyond our experience. God is at the heart of our lives but is always beyond our limited grasp, beyond anything we can see or imagine. Thanks to Jesus we dare to call this transcendent God 'Father', for we have come to believe that we should not fear God, for it is God who continues to create us out of love. We find our true selves in relationship to the God who, as Father, continues to hold us in being, as Word, continues to dialogue with us, and as Spirit breathes healing love into our broken lives.

(It is important to note that when we call God 'Father' we do not have the same understanding as Jesus' contemporaries had. They understood that a 'father' was the sole source of life, a life received and nurtured by a mother. We know now that only father and mother together are the source of life. To pray as Jesus prayed we have to include all that we mean by 'Mother' as well as 'Father').

John of the Cross reminds us of an even deeper level of intimacy to which God invites us, and it is this intimacy that we celebrate in today's liturgy of the Blessed Trinity.

'Jesus takes you tenderly in his arms, and there gives you his love.

And when you are thus one with him, he lifts you to the Father,  
where God's own joy will be your joy.

For as the Father and the Son and the Spirit who proceeds from them live in one another,  
so it is with you. For, taken wholly into God, you will live the life of God'(Romance 4,15-17).

The answer to the question 'Who am I' is found here. We are creatures called to share in the intimacy of God's love. That is why we experience this insatiable longing for love.

So far we have been reflecting on how we experience God. The Feast of the Trinity, however, says more than that. It expresses an astonishing insight into the very being of God.

It is important for us to pause here to reflect on the different levels of knowledge of which we are capable. At the risk of being simplistic I will limit my reflections to two connected but different kinds of knowledge.

The first is the kind of knowledge with which the empirical sciences deal. With careful experiment and the rigorous application of logic we are continually refining of knowledge of the way things work. It is this kind of knowledge that is taking us to the stars as well as developing our understanding of the microscopic world. We are rightly proud of the achievements of science. Understanding the complex interactions that influence events is not an exact science. There are far too many complexities involved. But it is important that we do not give up the task of searching for meaning. Human psychology is another example of our longing to understand in a methodical way the subtle working of the human mind and heart. We cannot comprehend the human psyche by applying the laws of physics, but we are learning to penetrate its complexities more and more deeply.

This brings me to the second level of knowledge. Let us reflect here on the whole world of understanding that has been opened up to us through love. It cannot be measured with the exactitude of scientific method, but that is because it takes us to the heart. Of course we need our logical mind to check on our heart, for the heart can deceive as well as enlighten, but to limit knowledge to what our over-rated intellect can be certain of would be to take the heart out of our lives. We are human beings, made for love, not machines made to tick over with precision. It is here that we find the knowledge that comes through faith. Just as the mind can be mistaken or enlightened, so it is with the heart. We must constantly test and refine our knowing in the light of experience. When the heart is truly enlightened, however, faith offers us a profound knowing. Just think of all that we have learned from those who have loved us!

It is the extraordinary love of the heart of Jesus that invites us to reflect on the wonderful truth which we are celebrating today on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity. Through his profound communion with God Jesus knew something that shed light on the ultimate reality that we call 'God'. Jesus is God's Word to us, showing us that God is love. Jesus was caught up in that love in a uniquely attractive way, and people found that when they were in communion with Jesus they picked up something of his Spirit, and enjoyed something of his communion with God. We experience the Loving (God's Spirit) that unites us to the Lover (Jesus), and engages our longing for communion with ultimate, infinite Love (God). In the words of Teilhard de Chardin: God is the heart and the beyond of everything. God is the 'heart' of everything. Again I quote from Saint John of the Cross: 'God dwells within you. You are yourself the tabernacle, his secret hiding place. Rejoice, exult, for all you could possibly desire, all your heart's longing is so close, so intimate as to be within you; you cannot *be* without God'(Spiritual Canticle 1.7). God is 'beyond' everything, never fully grasped, ever drawing us into infinite love.

Knowing that God is Spirit reminds us to be attentive to the divinely inspired movements of our own heart: movements of longing as we yearn for closer communion with him whose Spirit inspires us; movements of wonder and praise as we rejoice in his being with us. It reminds us to be sensitive to these movements in every man and every woman.

Knowing that God is Word reminds us to be attentive to the words and actions through which God speaks to us, and the words and actions through which we respond to him.

Knowing that God is Father-Mother, we learn to reverence the sacred ground of each person's spirit, and be attentive to each person's word, as together we journey towards our mysterious God, the Source (the Father-Mother) of all.