

Priests used always to be very grateful to Bishops on Trinity Sunday because it was the traditional day for the Bishop to send a letter appealing for funds to train new priests for the Diocese. So the priests who had already been trained did not need to say anything about the Trinity, and this restriction they used to suffer with ill-disguised enthusiasm. This is a great pity, because we should surely look forward to the privilege of speaking of God, even if we have to acknowledge the poverty of anything we come up with. On this solemnity, we are asked to speak of God in the inner mystery of his life.

The first thing we should say is that God does not preserve secrets from us, but tells us all that we can ask to know. He is hugely mysterious to us because we don't know how to ask for knowledge; our whole being is too small to contain even the questions that would lead us to know. Paul speaks of his converts as babies, who can only receive milk, no solid food. When it comes to learning divine truth, we are all babies.

But when we speak of God's ways of revealing himself to us, we know several more things: that he shows us himself in the wonder of what he has made, and most excellently in his making of us in his own likeness. We know, therefore, that the best place for us to learn about God is in our relating to each other. We also know that some people can reveal more to us about God than others- and we have recognised in prophets and saints the ones who have the miraculous power to unveil to us what God is like. Of all of these no-one has approached the tremendous power and truth that we saw in Jesus of Nazareth. He claimed to be quite uniquely our Teacher, and we have gladly accorded him that role in our lives.

When we speak of the Holy Trinity, we are speaking of the truth which Jesus reveals to us about God. The Church has reflected and meditated on this truth for many centuries, finding in it the place of entry into revealed mystery. By coming to Christ in prayerful thought we have been privileged to follow a great light, which has taught us things almost inexpressible in human words. As we have listened to the words of Jesus, and been able to live our lives in his presence, we have come to sense what it meant to him to live for his Father, to spend himself on the Father's will, and so to lose his life in a great act of sacrifice -the Cross -in which we find our nature opened to the Father. But this is the deed which the man Jesus does *because a/his divine role towards the Father in eternity*. In all eternity the Son of God receives life from God the Father as a loving gift; and having received the Father's total divine life he returns the gift -equally totally -in perfect obedience and thanksgiving. These deeds are simultaneous and eternal: the gift of the Father to the Son, the gift of the Son to the Father. When we speak of the gift that passes between them, we know it can be nothing less than the givers themselves. If they gave less than themselves, the gift would not be a divine gift, would therefore not be worthy of them. The gift considered in itself we call the Holy Spirit, and the givers and the gift taken as one we call the Holy Trinity.

When we watched Jesus of Nazareth living, in a human life, the divine being of God's Son, we were enabled to look in upon the divine life, we saw standing before us the Son of God, eating and drinking with us, speaking in our streets, meeting us in our littleness and weakness. We sensed something in him that was more powerful and more significant than any ordinary mortal life, but we were foxed about what it was. In his dying Jesus showed us what he is in eternity, and it is in our reflection on the way he did this that we have evolved our language about the inner life of God. We saw the totality of his obedience to the generating power of the Father, the totality of his selfless trust in the One who gives us all life. In the fullness of this gift we also saw how the gift of the Father to the Son is infinite, conveying to Christ the totality of the divine life. In resurrection the Father takes the human gift of Jesus, and raises it to share finally in the Trinitarian life which is the heart of God. It is as if the utter gift of divine life which eternally passes to the Son is inherited

by the man Jesus, thus opening for the rest of his brothers and sisters the possibility of inheritance with him. This has only been possible for us because the Son of God became what we are, and lived among us, so that we saw his glory, that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

All of the language we use to express this truth is analogical. We would like to believe that we could know the truth of God, and that our lives would be analogical to that. Instead, we come towards this mystery from the other direction: we know a good deal about ourselves, and we try to draw valid conclusions about our Maker. If it were not for Jesus the Christ we would be hopelessly lost. We know what human fatherhood is like at its best; we know a little about sonship for humans; from these things we draw some halting imagery which we apply to the fatherhood of God -making it clear that our knowledge is pitifully partial. But when we are granted the inrushing grace of a faith, hope, and love that is transformed with a share in the divine life -and I am sure that this happens very many times in many lives -then the Holy Spirit is in our giving and receiving, and we are caught up into the world where divine grace unites us with God. That is the fullest and most beautiful experience that can be granted us on earth. If you say you know a better one, I will tell you to look at it again, and ask yourself whether you may not have been granted without your knowledge a share in the life of the Holy Trinity.