

## THE MOST HOLY TRINITY; YEAR A 2020.

The Gospel begins with the words, “Jesus said to Nicodemus”; what it does not say is why Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus in the first place. If we remind ourselves why it was this conversation was taking place, we have a starting point to look at principle and theological framework of the Christian faith, the Holy and Blessed Trinity.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and his heart and mind are already stirred by a growing wonder at what he has seen and heard about Jesus. But he has questions, genuine questions that are bothering him. Jesus answers his concerns but not before he points out that being a religious leader Nicodemus should really have more insight and understanding.

Nicodemus is in the dark. St John uses the symbolism of “night time”, but always for St John this is another way of indicating either spiritual or intellectual darkness. There are matters of faith that relate to Jesus that Nicodemus is in the dark about. I like Nicodemus, he represents for many of us the spokesman of those who want to understand and grow in the faith but it doesn't always readily come so easy. I heard it once said that Nicodemus should be the Patron Saint of those who wonder what is going on.

And it is his introduction into the principal reading of Trinity Sunday that provides a kind of subtext to this Solemnity, for it is not unreasonable to embrace the glorious and blessed Trinity while not knowing what any of it is about. We give credal ascent to it in the definition laid down by St Athanasius, but for those of us who are not cognisant with the subtleties of Greek philosophical thought all we can do is trust that at least they knew what they trying to say, but usually only one word stands out from that creed for many, and that is the word “incomprehensible”

However, we do liturgical, prayerfully and in practice give our ascent to the Trinity for as incomprehensible as it may be it is the nearest thing that the Church can teach that makes the Persons of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit the only orthodox way of speaking about their natures, their unity and their diversity.

What does help us to see that this is a mystery born out of the experience of the Church as revealed by God, rather than just a very complicated set of mental propositions that have no workable value is to look at the interplay between the persons primarily from Scripture and from the faith as we live it moment by moment. The Trinity may never be fully understood in this life but we are not left without the faculties of our senses and intellect to see it in action.

We start with what we know; we start with Jesus. We could equally start with God or the Holy Spirit, but with Jesus we meet the Trinity in something that we can relate to, God in Human nature, God with the characteristics and the form of flesh and blood. Before the Trinity is anything else it is first “encounter”, it is a baby in the arms of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Jesus breaks open for us the mystery of the Divine. By his life death and Resurrection, by his glorious Ascension and the pouring out of the Spirit we see into the heart of God.

So in Jesus we see how life should be lived, we see what God wants of us because when we see Jesus we see the Father. “Show us the Father,” says Philip, and Jesus replies, “Have I been all this time with you and you still do not know me? If you have seen me you have seen the Father.” Being with Jesus is being with the Father. We know the truth of this. There has been a point in all our lives, either a distinct moment of clarity or a gradual growing into awareness that Jesus is in fact the human face of God. And from this realisation we want no more than to worship him and conform our lives to his life.

But why us; Why is it that we and millions of people come to this realisation and others do not. Why does that make perfect sense to so many and yet for others the idea of a living active God is meaningless? There are of course no easy answers, but we can say one thing. Last week, Pentecost Sunday, we heard St Paul say to the Corinthians, “no one can say Jesus is Lord unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, promised to the disciples before Jesus was taken up into Heaven is a gift for all humanity that only some reach out to grasp because truth is glimpsed and recognised. There needs to be an inner willingness, some small opening that the Spirit can work upon. And that opening is usually achieved when we play our part to show that the living God is reasonable and it has something of

immense value to say. When we live Trinitarian lives, pointing to the love of God by our imitation of his Son Jesus in a strength and confidence that seems to go beyond what we are capable of then there is a far bigger chance that others who see with their physical eyes will begin to see with the eyes of faith.

Trinity Sunday is the Fulcrum of the liturgical year. We have been witnesses to the great moment of God becoming man at Christmas; we have watched with Jesus through his death and resurrection; we have been with the Disciples as the Spirit has been poured out. Armed with these moments of Trinitarian expressions we begin to move into the second part of the liturgical year we will see how these expressions work together in unity and in their diversity as we follow the ministry of Christ and his disciples. We may not be able to deliver a formula that explains the trinity but we will certainly know it when we see it.

Nicodemus didn't understand but he was the one who was at the cross of Jesus drawing out the nails from his crucified body and helping Joseph of Aramathea to lay him in the tomb. A gospel was written in his name and although was apocryphal, shows evidence of it being read out to early church congregations. Nicodemus may have been in the dark in some aspects of understanding but he lived in the life of the trinity in the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

AMEN