Some thoughts for Trinity Sunday, which is one of the few feasts in the Christian calendar when we celebrate a doctrine rather than an event.

As a child, I grew up with the colours of the church’s year, with the changing of the Altar Frontal as we went through the different seasons: we have the rather sombre purple of Advent and Lent giving way to the glorious white of Christmas and Easter; we have the rich red of Palm Sunday, Pentecost and major Saints’ Days. The arrival of green for the Trinity season always rather stopped me in my tracks. Looking back, my reaction was probably prompted by two thoughts in my child’s mind. Firstly, I was rather daunted by the prospect of unending ‘green weeks’ ahead, which I knew would seem to go on forever – there can be over 20 Sundays in the season of Trinity, an unending time span for a child! But also, I was never quite sure of the mystery of the Trinity and what it represented. I still vividly remember asking my Dad about it, and as we sat together on the grass he plucked and presented me with a clover leaf, asking me whether I held in my hand one leaf or three …….

My understanding of the Trinity is (I hope!) rather more mature now but the mystery, the awe, the wonder, are still very much present. Belief in a Creator God the Father, who created out of nothing; belief in a Begotten Son, who has always existed as part of that One God and whose life in human form was sacrificed for us; belief in an equally co-existent Holy Spirit who guides all who are prepared to follow – it is indeed a mystery which stretches our understanding.

The Scriptures help us as we strive to understand, and this is well illustrated for us in our readings for today.

In Isaiah Ch 40 we meet the Creator God whose power is unquestionable. – more powerful than any empire or nation, even the Babylonians who had defeated Judah. Nothing compares to the power and love of God and when we acknowledge this it can help us to look at world events and be energised to embrace present times, daunting though these may sometimes be.

Psalm 8 reminds us that humanity has been given a hugely significant role to play in God’s created world. So often this responsibility is abused as humankind seeks power and domination, but the psalmist makes clear that God’s majesty, might and love will finally have their way – God may sometimes take risks in trusting responsibility to be exercised, but is committed to taking creation to its destiny.

The final sentence in our reading from 2 Corinthians Ch 13 is so very familiar to us and often used : ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you – yet we do not always realise that the words actually come from Paul. It is a regular prayer or blessing in many churches and sums up what being a Christian is all about – it draws the focus firmly on to the God we know in and through Jesus and the Spirit. Throughout the New Testament, God’s love is at the very heart of his character, the essence of who God is. The One God who made the world is a totally loving God, who would demonstrate this love by acting within the world, at enormous cost to himself, to put everything right at last after humankind had undone the good work of perfect creation. To know, accept and share such love is a joy which requires a change of heart, of life, of community, of behaviour so thorough and costly that many turn away from it. The apparently simple instructions Paul gives are themselves very demanding – to put things in order, to agree with each other, to live in peace. The mutual greetings of peace can sometimes become rather strained, to say the least – but we are left in no doubt as to how it should be.

The reading from Matthew Ch 28 sums up the mystery of the Trinity in the familiar words used at baptism. After his resurrection, Jesus invites his disciples to meet with him so that they can be commissioned in turn – to go to do the work of making disciples, and baptising them ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’. Some of the disciples hesitated, or doubted – why, I wonder? Did they doubt that it was really Jesus? As good Jews who worshipped the one true God even though the culture all around them worshipped many gods, did they wonder if they could actually worship Jesus also? We don’t know the reason for their hesitation – but what is clear is that they DID worship Jesus, and Matthew wants us also to see that in Jesus the promise of his gospel has been fulfilled. Jesus is the one true God who has authority in heaven and earth, to bring it under the rule of his life-giving love.

And how is he doing this? Well, here is the shock: *he is doing this* *through us, his followers*. Like the eleven on the mountain, we too are commissioned to take the work forward. All who believe in Christ, who bear witness to his resurrection, are given the responsibility to make real in the world the authority which he holds, and we do this by allowing ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit. This after all, is part of the answer to the prayer that God’s kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. If we pray those words, we shouldn’t be surprised if we are called upon to help bring God’s answer to it. By so doing, we bear witness to having been baptised ourselves in the name of the trinitarian God.

All those years ago, my Dad also pointed out to me that those seemingly unending weeks of Trinity were ‘green Sundays’ because they were ‘growing days’ when we could give some thought to how well we are doing in nurturing the growth of our church. I have held on to that thought – time when we should perhaps reflect on growing our relationship with God and with each other, to remember that such relationships must value difference as well as sameness; time to think about ways in which we can reach further out into our community and share with others the joy of knowing Christ. Building relationships takes time, so having a stretch of ‘green weeks’ to reflect is most welcome.

So, Trinity Sunday, when we focus on the Three in One. It really does not matter that 1 + 1 + 1 = 1 may seem illogical and arithmetically incorrect. The whole truth and nature of God and his love for us is beyond our understanding, but we can truly rejoice that we have a Trinitarian God - a Father who sent his Son, through whom we are promised salvation if we are prepared to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Amen

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