



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

June 2020

My dear friends and colleagues,

The Feast of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity concludes the first half of the Christian year. It was as late as 1334 that Pope John XXII declared that Trinity Sunday should be celebrated all over Christendom, although by then it was already a popular festival in England because Archbishop Thomas Becket had made it so nearly two centuries earlier. Our Christian calendar spends the first half of the Church's year, from Advent until Pentecost gradually unfolding the revelation of God in His Son and then in His Spirit, and now comes Trinity Sunday as the summation of it all.

From the Archdeacon's desk



So why is it that the Trinity is nevertheless supposed to be one of the most difficult of Christian doctrines? Well, as so often, the problem lies not with the truth of the doctrine, but with our way of thinking about and expressing the doctrine. The first Christian disciples were not trained philosophers, but they had discovered in Jesus Christ the human face of the God of love. They had been filled with the power of that love when they received the Spirit. For them, that was enough.

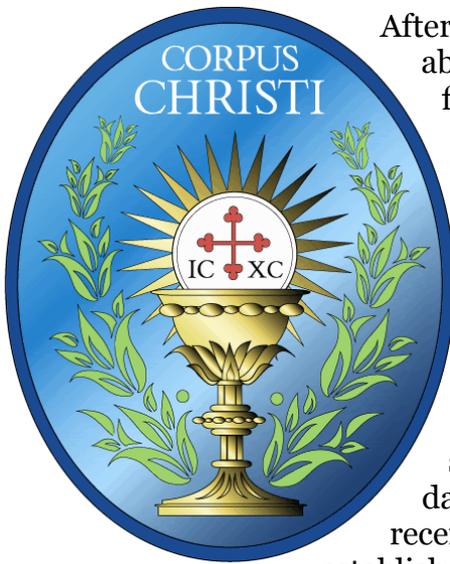
But there are still many Christians who avoid spending too much time thinking about the Trinity because they cannot get their heads round the notions of 3-in-1 and 1-in-3. But if you deny that Jesus is divine, God's Son; if you deny that the Holy Ghost is divine, the Spirit of God – what have you got left? A God Who never made Himself incarnate in this world. A Jesus Who is simply a dead prophet – a fine teacher, a good man, but dead. A Spirit which (not Who) is really no more than the best thoughts and intentions of you and of me. Is that enough for you? I'm sure it's not enough for me.

So it looks as if I – and you too, I hope – must persevere with getting to grips with our Trinitarian faith. And I don't think it's as difficult as some people would have us believe. It's just that God makes Himself known to us in three different ways, three manifestations, three dimensions of His being. The Book of Genesis opens with the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters. That same Spirit descends upon the disciples at Pentecost. Moses is granted a glimpse of the glory of the Father, and it is the Father who is proclaimed by the prophets. And Jesus is described by John at the beginning of his Gospel as God's Word, God's expression of himself, made flesh. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus Himself tells the disciples that "he who has seen me has seen the Father". And still today we can know God in these three different dimensions, these three different relationships, and we are captivated by these different expressions of God at different times. Sometimes it is the Fatherhood of God that overwhelms me, the God Who is over all and above all and beyond all: the God Whom I can only know in mystery and majesty, and worship in wonder and in awe. Sometimes it is God the Son Who is with me most powerfully, my friend and my brother, Who walks with me and talks with me. And sometimes I am most aware of God the Spirit, God within me, God coming to me as Comforter or Enabler or Strengtheners.

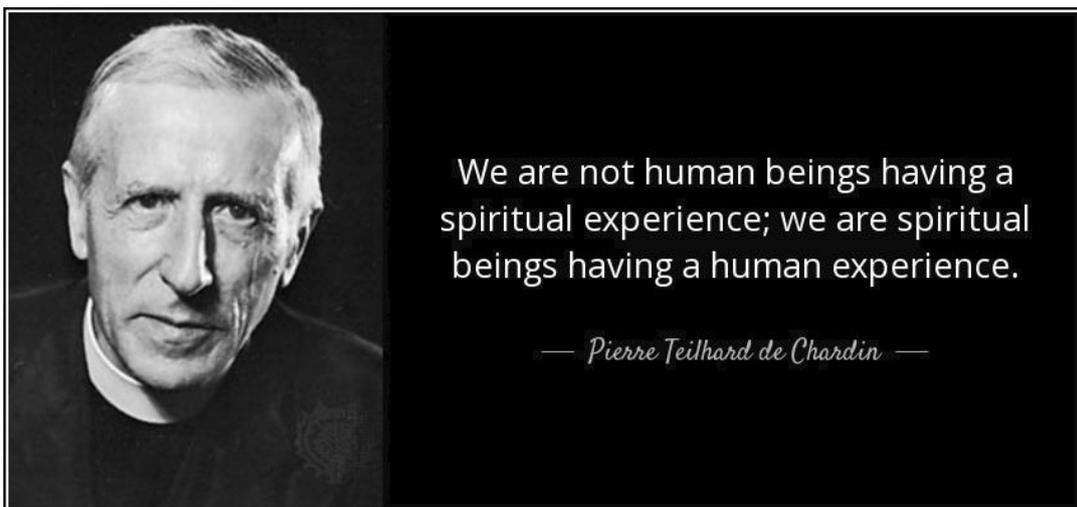
You cannot have a two-dimensional building – they have to have three dimensions. And so it is with God. This is why Christians, uniquely, celebrate the Feast of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, because the Trinity is the heart of our Faith. It is the celebration of God *over* us, the celebration of God *with* us and the celebration of God *in* us. And our prayer today, and every day, should be that God in Trinity will be over and with and in our hearts, our lives and our Church, this day and always.

Fr. Raymond Thompson

Archdeacon



After the lovely Eastertide Sundays, which this year we were not able to enjoy in our churches, we begin to reach the end of the first half of the liturgical year. The great feasts of the Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday are followed by the glorious festival of Corpus Christi. This feast was instituted to be held on the first Thursday outside Eastertide when the focus could be placed on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The institution of the Holy Eucharist took place of course on Maundy Thursday, but the focus of that occasion is a shared one between the institution of the Sacred Priesthood and the Washing of the Feet, and the Agony in Gethsemane. The occasion is too solemn and sorrowful to be a festal celebration. The origins of the feast date back to the early 13th century when Saint Juliana of Liège received visions inspiring her to press for such a feast to be established. There are many stories of miracles which have been attributed to the Blessed Sacrament through the centuries, and these have contributed to the veneration in which the Sacred Species are held. One such recounted miracle says that on Easter Sunday 1171, Mass was being celebrated in Ferrara, Italy. As the celebrant broke the consecrated host blood spurted from it – so violently and in such quantity that it sprayed the walls. At the same time, the host turned into flesh. It is said this blood can still be seen in Ferrara. Other Eucharistic miracles have also been documented: in Lanciano, Italy in 700, in Blaine, France in 1153, in Santarém, Portugal in 1247, in Bolsena, Italy in 1263, and there have been a good many more. In Regensburg, Germany in 1257 a priest was saying Mass when, on this occasion, he began to wonder if in fact it was true that the bread and wine became the body and blood of Jesus. He raised the chalice and as he did so the body on the cross in front of him seemed to come alive, one hand detached itself from the cross and took the chalice from the priest's hands. He stepped back in shock and fear, looking intently at the miracle and "fervently repented of his doubts". The chalice was then given back to him. After investigating numerous miracles Pope Urban IV declared Corpus Christi a feast throughout the Western Church in 1264. It is indeed a beautiful festival and one which has great significance for all who hold dear the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.



(For variety I will often use as a "desk picture" some Isle of Sheppey scenes viewed from my desk, from the garden, or within a few minutes of it.)

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