Trinity Sunday, Year C

GOSPEL

Jesus said to his disciples:

'I still have many things to say to you
but they would be too much for you now.
But when the Spirit of truth comes
he will lead you to the complete truth,
since he will not be speaking as from himself
but will say only what he has learnt;
and he will tell you of the things to come.
He will glorify me,
since all he tells you
will be taken from what is mine.
Everything the Father has is mine;
that is why I said:
*All he tells you
will be taken from what is mine*.'

(John 16:12–15)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The early Christians struggled to comprehend how God is both one and three. Many great councils of the Church were held to clarify what this meant and find the right language to describe the trinitarian relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. It was not until the Council of Constantinople in ad 381 that the doctrine of the Trinity was defined.

- Many Church prayers express our belief in a triune God (three persons in one). One of the greatest and simplest of these prayers is the sign of the cross, in which we dedicate ourselves 'in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.

- St Augustine described the Trinity in terms of the 'lover', the 'beloved' and the 'love' that exists within them.

- St Patrick reportedly used the shamrock to explain the three-persons-in-one God to the pagans of Ireland.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The belief in one God made the people of Israel unique among the nations of the ancient world. Jesus refers to this God as 'Abba', or Father, which implies a relationship with this God. Jesus also speaks of the Spirit, and again, a relationship is implied between Jesus and the Spirit, for this Spirit will continue speaking the words of God and of Jesus, and it will glorify them. Thus began the early church's deep reflection on the mystery of Jesus and on the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. This relationship was ultimately formulated in what we now call the Trinity.

In this text, Jesus does not simply address those who are present with him but also those who will search for the truth in the centuries to come. We are all led to complete truth and understanding through the actions of the Holy Spirit, who directs us to the Father and the Son: '*At the heart of the mystery of the Trinity is a Father whose love is incarnated in the Son who gives life to the world, and in the mutual love which exists between the Father and the Son and touches our lives as the Holy Spirit*' (F. Maloney, *This is the Gospel of the Lord, Year C*, Sydney: St Paul Publications, 1991, p. 115).

- Explore the ways in which Jesus embodies the love of God.

- How does the Spirit continue to lead us to the truth?

- You could explore some depictions of the Trinity in art (an online search will yield many results). Compare classical representations with contemporary images of the Trinity. Discuss what these visual interpretations convey to you about the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What has led you to search for the complete truth?

- What have you learned so far?

- Where do you feel the Spirit leading you now?

- People have many different images of God. He can be a distant, cosmic figure, or something of a Santa Claus from whom we ask favours, or someone we turn to only in times of trouble. Explore some of the ways you have thought about God during your life. Has your understanding changed over time? What are some significant moments in your life that have led you to a new understanding of God?

- Start and end each day with a sign of the cross this week. Contemplate the meaning of this action and live each day 'in God's name'.

- One beautiful prayer to the Trinity is:

*Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.*

Memorise this prayer and pray it often this week.

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the 'hierarchy of the truths of faith'.

- You could explore the sections of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that deal with how the Father, Son and Spirit reveal each other.

- Examine some of the prayers of the Church, including the eucharistic prayers and prefaces to identify the trinitarian formulations they contain. Notice the images conveyed and the kind of prayer addressed to each person of the Trinity.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

Human beings will always struggle before the mystery of God, who is one but also three. St Augustine's conceptualisation of the Trinity as a communion of love provides a rich and powerful image. Can our own communion of love with others teach us something about the life and love of the Trinity?

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- How does your community express belief in the triune God? Does your church display any artistic or architectural representations of the Trinity? You could examine these together.

- Form an unbroken circle with vine, ivy or another similar plant. Place three candles within the circle to represent the persons of the Trinity. Pray for each other in your journey towards truth. Sing a Trinity hymn, such as Alleluia, Sing (GA 380). Conclude with the prayer of exorcism in the RCIA at §94B.

NOTES