



May 30, 2021 Mt. 28: 16-20, Deut. 4:32-34, 39-40

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

This reading for Trinity Sunday is at the very end of Matthew's gospel. St Augustine says : The Trinity is like a string trio, each playing a different instrument and making a different contribution, but so attuned to each other that they produce a common sound, each line of which needs the other two to be intelligible." A statement about the Trinity took until the 4-5th Century to develop. It came out of the lived experience of the early church. Some credit Benedictine Monasteries of the ninth and eleventh centuries in promoting liturgical prominence for this expression of the mystery of God. Pope John XXII decreed that the Divine Office of the Blessed Trinity be observed by the entire Church (1334). So if you have some challenge understanding this truth, just think of God's love so powerful that it melts the boundary between you and God as Fr. Beck's drawing makes clear.

Mt. 28: 16-20

16 Then the **eleven** disciples went away into **Galilee**, into a **mountain** where Jesus had **directed** them. 17 And when they saw him, they **worshipped** him: but some **doubted**. 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All **power** is given unto me in **heaven** and in **earth**. 19 Go you therefore, and **teach all nations**, **baptizing** them in the name of the **Father**, and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Spirit**: 20 **Teaching** them to **observe** all things whatsoever I have **commanded** you: and, I am **with** you always, even unto the **end** of the **world**. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus promises to be with us even unto the end of the world. Do you have confidence in that promise?

PRAYER: Blessed Trinity, ground of all that is, I sense your presence in my life in those moments when everything seems to come together and make sense, even though I would be hard pressed to give a rational explanation for believing is such a reality. This seems to be the way you created all that is, including me. Something responds to this truth instinctively as the most real of any real. Help me as I trust this ability to respond to your activity in my life. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

ELEVEN: No longer the perfect number twelve, the eleven disciples once again find themselves on a mountain, ready to receive their commissioning.

Have you ever thought that you too are commissioned, even though you lack of perfection?

GALILEE: Galilee is that place where Jesus begins his ministry. It is a little, unpretentious place that he calls home. It is also the district of the Gentiles; non-Jews who don't believe in the God of Abraham. Jesus starts out where people don't have God stereotyped, and he finishes in this very same place.

Why do you think Jesus had the disciples return to Galilee for this last time with him on earth? How might this help the disciples as they go out to do as he commanded?

MOUNTAIN: Throughout this gospel we hear about mountains (4:8; 5:1-8; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3). Now we finish on a mountain, which is traditionally the place of revelations.

What is it about a mountain that makes it a suitable place for revelations?

DIRECTED: Just before leaving Jesus gives directions of where to go, what to do, and how to do it.

What implication does that have for us the descendants of these disciples? Are you good at following his directions?

WORSHIPPED: We use the word worship only for God. It acknowledges God as the ultimate source of being.

Is there anything in your life today that tends to usurp the place of God as the ultimate source of your being?

DOUBTED: It is said that doubt is the shadow cast by faith. If there were no faith, or no light, there would be no shadow/doubt.

Does it help you to know that even here some of the disciples still doubted? If so how?

POWER: Jesus is very clear about where his source of power lies. He reminds Pilate at the trial that legitimate power comes only from God. Now he is about to return to God and he empowers the disciples to do as he did.

Are you clear about your source of authentic power? What are the signs of inauthentic power?

HEAVEN / EARTH: Heaven and earth signify the totality of all creation. Jesus is Lord of all this, and now delegates this power to those who have stayed through the end.

How do you share in this delegation of mission because of your baptism?

TEACH /ING: A teacher is one who is recognized as one having expertise in an area that you lack. It is said that true humility is the ability to be teachable.

How are the disciples now able to be teachers as never before? What enables them to overcome their doubts and try to comply with Jesus' instructions?

NATIONS: The word nations in scripture usually indicate all the others that do not share the Jewish faith, e.g. Gentiles. Whereas before, the disciples were told to stay within their own Jewish boundaries, now they are sent to literally the whole world.

We share baptism because they did what Jesus asked. Have you ever placed yourself within this reading as a 'Gentile' who stands on the faith shoulders of these first believers?

BAPTIZING: Circumcision was the ordinary way to enter into the faith community of Jesus' day. Now it becomes baptism.

What is it about these two rituals that made them suitable for an inclusion rite? What difference will it make now that baptism is the initiation ritual?

FATHER: God has revealed God's self in the patriarchal period as Father. There are references as well to God as mother, but these references are few and relatively unrecognized in Jesus' day.

Do you find the image of God as 'Father' helpful? If so, why? If not, why?

SON: Jesus as a child of God, calls himself 'son'. He is intimately connected with God by way of birth.

Why do we Christians baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? What does this say about what we are doing in baptism?

HOLY SPIRIT: In the Hebrew Scriptures there was a concept of the holiness of God's spirit, but until Pentecost the people would not have experienced it personally. We now use the word 'Spirit' instead of Ghost.

Which word works best for you? Why?

OBSERVE: To observe is to watch and then to do.

How has this Easter time shown you what to see and do?

COMMANDED: A commandment is an instruction given by someone in authority.

What has Jesus commanded the disciples to do? What will that involve? How will they be able to do it?

WITH: To be with is to join with someone or something.

Do you think this is a key word for the disciples? Why? Do you feel Jesus is with you as you try to live out his instructions?

END: The end is the completion of something. The disciples, and all the baptized, are promised Jesus' presence and help up through and into the end of the age.

Do you have a confidence that this is true? What gives you this confidence? If not, what undermines it?

WORLD: The world is the word used to indicate, that which is limited by space and time. We are here promised that Jesus will be with us throughout all those limits.

Does this guarantee a suitable outcome for all creation? In what way? What does this tell you about God?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 28: 19 // Mk. 16:15f; Lk. 24:47; Mt. 28:20 // Jn. 14:18-23;

See also: Mt. 28:16 // Jn. 21:1-23; Mt. 28:17 // Lk. 24:22ff; Jn. 20:27; Mt. 28:19//Acts 2: 38; 2 Cor. 13: 13;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Dt. 4: 32-34, 39-40; Ps. 33: 4-6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22; Rom. 8: 14-17; Mt. 28: 16-20;

Revised Common Lectionary: Is. 6: 1-8; Ps. 29: Rom. 8: 12-17; Jn. 3: 1-17;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Recall a time when you experienced an ease of being and doing, where you felt focused and energized and full of joy, where you were wholly present and yet more than yourself. Psychologists call this "flow." Perhaps these moments come while writing poetry, dancing, playing an instrument, painting, or non-artistic tasks such as washing dishes or solving a mathematical equation. Experiencing flow is like participating in the divine dance of Trinity—a relationship of continuous giving and receiving between you and the task. Seek out these times when you are actively one with the energy flowing through you. Listen within for hints of what may be your soul's calling and vocation, your unique way of participating in the life of the world. Richard Rohr

Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist who was a major contributor to quantum physics and nuclear fission, said the universe is "not only stranger than we think, but stranger than we can think." Our supposed logic has to break down before we can comprehend the nature of the universe and the bare beginnings of the nature of God. I think the doctrine of the Trinity is saying the same thing. The "principle of three" breaks down all dualistic either-or thinking and sets us on a dynamic course of ongoing experience.... The belief in God as a Trinity is saying God is more an active verb than a stable noun. You know it in the flow of life itself. Richard Rohr: The Shape of God: Deepening the Mystery of the Trinity

The Trinity is the life that the Spirit lives and brings.

Goergen, Donald. [Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit](#). NY. Pg. 214. Paulist Press. 2006.

God ever works with his two hands, the Son and the Spirit-St. Irenaeus (2nd C. bishop)

"On Trinity Sunday, rather than try to solve the mystery, let us ask how open we are to it: the mystery of why God created us to begin with; the mystery of God loving us, desiring to be part of our lives, to live in our hearts; to be one with us; the mystery of God inviting us to share in the life of the Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit; the mystery of a God who cares for us like a loving parent, who lays down his life for us like a best friend, who fills our hearts like a lover who will not be refused."-- Fr. Thomas Rossica,

As truly as God is our father, so just as truly is he our mother. In our father, God Almighty, we have our being: in our merciful mother we are remade and restored....It is I, the strength and goodness of fatherhood. It is I, the wisdom of motherhood. It is I, the light and grace of holy love, It is I, the Trinity; it is I the unity.

Julian of Norwich Pg.177 Rolheiser, Ronald. [Against an Infinite Horizon](#). NY. Crossroad Pub. 2001

Contemplation's object is God, and God is triune life. But as far as we are concerned, we only know of this triune life from the son's incarnation. Consequently we must not abstract from the incarnation in our contemplation. Hans Urs von Balthasar-

The Eucharistic prayer is the great prayer of thanksgiving, around which lies the entire mystery of our salvation. It is much more than a tool to "bring God down onto the altar." Rather, it is more sublime, something akin to Mary's understanding of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, but here coming on us all, bringing forth the mystery we call God: the sacred slipping into the profane and bearing God to humans. Plaiss, Mark. This, Too Is My Body. Commonweal. 5/19/06. Pg. 10.

God is the self-related community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the community of divine love, the principle of creativity is always there, in the form of the Father; the principle of otherness is always there, in the form of the Son; and the principle of ecstasy is always there, in the form of the Spirit. Thus the inner divine life is characterized by a self-relatedness that provides the common matrix for God's outward relationality. The world is created out of God's will, a divine will that stimulates and enjoys otherness. Gregersen, Niels Henrik. *Risk and Religion*. Zygon. 6/03 P. 371

...the Christian community, over its first fifty years, perceived its role as one of using the power and presence of Jesus as the basis of its preaching. The inclusion of this now familiar baptismal formula shows that some form of Trinitarian language was emerging within the community. Pg. 103.

Wessels, Cletus. [Jesus in the New Universe Story](#). Maryknoll NY. Orbis Books. 2003.

The first worshippers of Jesus, the three wise men, were Gentiles. In the course of the narrative, Matthew had already quoted a prophecy from Israel about the servant of God, of whom Is. 53:4 says, "And in his name the Gentiles will hope" (Mt. 12:21). There remains one condition, however, for the Gentiles to be accepted: Jesus tells the disciples not only to go to all the nations and to baptize them, but also to teach the nations "to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28: 20). The law must be fulfilled. Although the church is by the time of the writing of the gospel separated from the synagogue, Matthew insists that the Gentile Christians remember that Jesus wholly belongs to the people of Israel and that they practice a righteousness that is fully committed to the law of Israel,

Koester, Helmut. *The Son of David and King of the Jews*. Bible Review, 2/96. Page 44. www.biblereview.org

Only Matthew's gospel tells us of this final message of Jesus to the disciples. We are reminded of Cyrus in 1 Chron. 36:23 and his royal decree. This is the only mention of the Holy Spirit in this gospel. It seems like having had the experience of Jesus, it made the disciples ever more aware of the Father. Then after experiencing the Holy Spirit, the disciples were even more aware of who Jesus really was. As time went on the effort to express this deepening awareness of God-ness took the form of what we now call the Trinity. Long and bitter battles were engaged, and lives lost, over the extended period of wrestling with this concept. Even today, we struggle if we try to explain to our Jewish or Muslim friends, just what we are trying to say with this word. Rubenstein, Richard E. [When Jesus Became God](#). NY. Harcourt Brace & Co. 1999.

The followers of Jesus continued to experience him as a living reality after his death, *but in a radically new way*. This is the uniform testimony of the early Christian movement; for them, Jesus was not simply a physical figure of the past, but a spiritual reality in the present. Borg, Marcus J. [Thinking About Easter](#). Bible Review. April 1994. Pages 15ff

"By some mysterious manifestation of the truth," she (St. Teresa of Avila) says, "the three Persons of the most Blessed Trinity reveal themselves, preceded by an illumination which shines on the spirit like a most dazzling cloud of light. The three Persons are distinct from one another; a sublime knowledge is infused into the soul, imbuing it with a certainty of the truth that the Three are of one substance, power, and knowledge, and are one God. Thus that which we hold as a doctrine of faith, the soul now, so to speak, understands by sight, though it beholds the Blessed Trinity neither by the eyes of the body nor of the soul, this being no imaginary vision. All the Three Persons here communicate Themselves to the soul, speak to it, and make it understand the words of our Lord in the Gospel, that He and the Father and the Holy Ghost will come and make their abode with the soul which loves Him and keeps His commandments.

"O my God, how different from merely hearing and believing these words is it to realize their truth in this way! Day by day a growing astonishment takes possession of this soul, for the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity seem never to depart; that they dwell far within its own centre and depths; though for want of learning it cannot describe how, it is conscious of the indwelling of these divine Companions." Evelyn Underhill:

Christ is revelation - the abolishment of every screen and every veil between the human mind and the splendor of the Trinity. 380. -- Emile Mersch's "The Theology of the Mystical Body" *Book III: Christ- Chapter 13: Revelation and the Trinity*

The spirit is the self-communication of God in the model of God's nature as the Trinity, which is really a way of trying to express an infinite energy system called Love, which is self-giving and self-transcending and creative. Fr. Laurence Freeman

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs 113-116. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Gram, Janice. [Imaaes](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976. ENDINGS Page 83 THE JOURNEY Page 135

Mitchell, Stephen. [The Enlightened Heart](#). Harper & Row, NY. 1989. THE LOVE OF GOD Page 68 HOLY SPIRIT Page 42