

THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Most Holy Trinity

The story is told of St Augustine of Hippo, the great philosopher and theologian who, at one time, was preoccupied with the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. He wanted so much to understand the doctrine of one God in three persons and to be able to explain it logically. One day he was walking along the sea shore and reflecting on this matter. Suddenly, he saw a little child all alone on the shore. The child made a hole in the sand, ran to the sea with a little cup, filled her cup with sea water, ran up and emptied the cup into the hole she had made in the sand. Back and forth she went to the sea, filled her cup and came and poured it into the hole. Augustine drew up and said to her, "Little child, what are you doing?" She replied, "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole."

"How do you think," Augustine asked her, "that you can empty this immense sea into this tiny hole and with this tiny cup?"

She answered back, "And you, how do you suppose that with your small head you can comprehend the immensity of God?" With that the child disappeared.

The doctrine of the inner relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in such a way that each of them is fully and equally God, yet there are not three Gods but one, cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind. It is a mystery.

If we expect that the Bible will give us a clear and elaborate presentation of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, we shall find out that it simply does not. The doctrine of three persons in one God, equal in divinity yet distinct in personality, is not explicitly spelt out in the Bible. In fact the very word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible at all. Early Christians arrived at the doctrine when they applied their God-given reason to the revelation which they had received in faith. Jesus spoke about the Father who sent him (the Son) and about the Holy Spirit whom he was going to send. He said that the Father had given him (the Son) all that he has and that he in turn has given to the Holy Spirit all that he has received from the Father. In this we see the unity of purpose among the three persons of the Trinity.

Like Augustine we may not be able to understand the **how** of the Trinity but I think it is very important to understand the **why**. Why did God reveal to us this mystery regarding the very nature of the Supreme Being? The importance of this doctrine lies in this: we are made in the image of God, therefore, the more we understand God the more we understand ourselves.

We are made in God's image and likeness. Just as God is God only in a Trinitarian relationship, so we can be fully human only in a relationship of three partners. The self needs to be in a horizontal relationship with others and a vertical relationship with God. In that way our life becomes Trinitarian like that of God. Then we discover that the so-called 'I-and-I' principle of unbridled individualism which is acceptable in modern society leaves much to be desired. The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity challenges us to adopt rather an 'I-and-God-and-neighbour' principle. I am a Christian insofar as I live in a relationship of love with God and other people. May the grace of the Holy Trinity help us to banish all traces of self-centeredness in our lives and to live in love of God and of neighbour.

Loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we come before you today, celebrating your presence in our lives and our world. We believe in you. We trust in you. We hope in you. We ask you to hear even the unspoken prayers hidden deep within our hearts.

We pray for all religious leaders, that they will be filled with the love of the Father, the self-sacrifice of the Son and the compassion of the Holy Spirit as they work to inspire hope and trust during this global pandemic.

We pray for everyone in international, national and local leadership during this period of Covid-19 decision-making, that they might use wisdom and compassion as they discern the way forward.

We pray for families, teachers and small children as schools reopen, that they might be safe and free from sickness.

We pray for all those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, friend, neighbour, customer or colleague, that they might find the comfort and support that they need and that those who have died might be enjoying eternal life with God.

We pray for farmers and growers who are coping with the effects of an unusually wet spring, lockdown and a long period of exceptionally dry weather, that God will bless and reward their efforts to bring food and loveliness into our lives and homes.

We pray for all frontline workers who have tried so hard to keep us safe and supplied with our many practical needs during the past couple of months, that God will bless and reward them for their care and generosity.

We pray for the people of the United States at this time, that peace might be restored and a way found to ease the current tensions, allowing people of all colours and creeds to live and work together in harmony.

Blessed Trinity of life and love, be the centre of our loves. Be the focus of our love. Amen.

And, finally, on a brighter note.

Knowing that the parish priest was very fond of cherry brandy, one of the elders offered to present him with a bottle on one consideration – that the priest acknowledge receipt of the gift in the parish magazine. 'Gladly', replied the good man.

When the magazine came out a few days later, the elder turned at once to the 'appreciation' column. There he read: 'Fr Jones extends his thanks to Elder Brown for his gift of fruit and for the spirit in which it was given.'



TRINITY SUNDAY

