

THE EMMAUS SERIES

Trinity Sunday, Year B

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

Romans 8:14-17

Matthew 28:16-20

The Father's glory is also the glory of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

'One God in three Persons'. The Blessed Trinity should be more than a baffling mystery that we accept on faith. Today's liturgy invites us to listen again to familiar texts, and to recognise – perhaps for the first time – how they invite us to share in the life which unites Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To appreciate what these texts have to tell us we must recall the foreshadowing that took place in the Old Testament. The mystery of God's life is revealed in what God has done for God's people. In the ongoing story of God's action in the life of the old Israel, 'the Word of God' and 'the Spirit of God' were themes that described God's self-expression. For people of that culture, the spoken word – the ruler's decree, a commitment by oath – had power. God's Word was a creative Word, shaping the course of history, confronting injustice – as our first reading asks, 'Was there ever a Word so majestic' as God's Word establishing the destiny of Israel by freeing them from slavery? God's Spirit was the energising presence of God, giving the breath of life, raising up heroes, looked forward to as giving final expression to the designs of God's heart in the full realisation of all of Israel's hopes.

The coming of the eternal Son among us brought a dramatic revelation of the ultimate identity of the Word of God and the Spirit of God, in the overflowing superabundance that is the divine life. The Son shows himself to be the Word so perfectly expressing all that the Father is as God, that they share the one divine life and glory; the Father and the Son give full expression to all the love and joy that they share, in the Spirit. Because we have heard the reading from Matthew's gospel many times, we could easily overlook how many themes it expresses so simply and profoundly. The mission of the Apostles is grounded in their resurrection faith. 'Some hesitated' still, Matthew reports, reminding us and reassuring us as we know the challenge faith brings. The Lord, the Word of God, who commissions the Apostles, shares in the divine glory and authority of the God of Israel's faith, which have been 'given' to him by his Father: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations, and know that I am with you to the end of time'.

This text is so familiar because of its reference to baptism in the name of the Trinity. In the Scriptures, names are seen to embody, make present, the person named. Baptism 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' is being plunged into the intimate life of the three divine friends who give themselves to us – something that has been described so magnificently for us in the Easter meditations of John's gospel.

And - as our reading from Paul to the Romans reminds us – long before the writing of the gospels Paul described the wonder of our sharing in the generous life of Father, Son and Spirit. The energising Spirit transforms the lives of those who share in the Saviour's Paschal Mystery – 'sharing his sufferings, so as to share his glory' – making us 'cry out, Abba, Father!' because we are truly 'coheirs with Christ'.

John Thornhill sm