

A Communion of Relational Love

Reflection on the Gospel-Trinity Sunday Year B

(Matt 28:16-20)

Veronica Lawson RSM

Trinity Sunday celebrates the core Christian conviction that God is a communion of relational love. For the people of Israel, no other god could compare with their God whom they knew as both creator and liberator and whom they experienced as intimately involved in every aspect of their lives. In a world of many gods, the assertion found in today's first reading from Deuteronomy that there is "no other god" was an enormous claim to make. Awareness of YHWH's sustaining and liberating presence brought with it serious responsibilities: keeping the commandments grounded the people of Israel in the life of their God.

The earliest Christians inherited the Jewish belief in one God. At the same time, Christian Jews expressed their faith in distinctively Trinitarian language. Over the first six centuries of the Christian era, the belief that God is a communion of love was to develop into the doctrine of the Trinity, a teaching that is at the heart of Christian faith. The word Trinity is not used in the Christian Scriptures. In fact, it was not until the Council of Constantinople in 381CE that the doctrine of the Trinity was set out in the creed, and not until the Second Council of Constantinople in 551CE that the word "Trinity" was actually used of the Triune God.

The gospel reading has Jesus commanding his followers to make disciples of all and to baptize in the name of the Trinity. At the beginning of this gospel, Jesus is named Emmanuel, "God with us". With Jesus' final assurance, "know that I am with you always", we find ourselves gathered into the very life of God. *Perichoresis*, a Greek term suggestive of both permeation and diversity in unity, is one of the earliest and probably one of the most striking metaphors used to explain this Trinitarian life of God. The life in God is three and yet one in a totally harmonious union of love. Since God is neither male nor female, the traditional male language of Father, Son and Spirit is not to be absolutized or taken as a literal description of the triune God: it is one way of imaging God.

As St. Paul reminds us in today's reading from his letter to the community in Rome, God is not a distant God, but rather a God whose Spirit draws us, as "joint heirs with Christ", into God's own life of love and relationship. Trinity Sunday is the day we set aside to celebrate the mystery of God and the nearness of God who invites us into the dynamic cycle of life and love, a cycle that reaches out beyond the human community and embraces the entire cosmos. As we make the sign of the cross, a symbolic action with a two millennia history (from 2nd Century CE), we might become more and more attentive to the wonder of the divine life that dwells in us and in whom we are privileged to dwell.