**TRINITY SUNDAY – 15th June 2014 7.00am Eucharist 8.30am Eucharist 9.30am Solemn Eucharist and Procession** Readings: Exodus 34:1-8; Psalm: Song of the Three Young Men 329-34; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20

Trinity Sunday is one of those days when clergy like to invite a guest preacher along. It’s not a favourite of preachers. Having journeyed through the cycle from Advent to Pentecost, we land on this festival that celebrates a belief, a doctrine of the Church, rather than an event. Events, narratives and stories we can relate to easily. The Trinity on the other hand, seems abstract and vague. God-in-Jesus living, teaching, healing, dying and rising touches us where we live. The Trinity seems to turn God into an idea, a dogma, and one that’s incomprehensible. Well of course it is.

St Augustine said if you don’t believe the Trinity you’ll lose your soul. If you try to understand it, you’ll lose your mind. What we can know with reasonable certainty is that the biblical narrative reveals God as creator, redeemer and sanctifier. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in all three functions.

From the beginning of the biblical narrative, we know God is Creator. We are creatures. God is the originator. We are stewards of what God had created, not owners. There are ethical implications arising from this understanding of the way things are. The planet doesn’t exist for our exploitation of its resources or inhabitants. All our relationships make sense only in reference to the prior relationship to the Creator. As St Paul said, “We do not live to ourselves” (Romans 14:7).

That’s a good reminder in our world of self-made people. During the week while searching for articles on creation I came across a website called *Self Creation: Self Improvement for Smart Women and Savvy Men.* I browsed some similar web articles and in sum, I discovered: self-made people often have to overcome great obstacles to achieve their goals. They attain their success through education, hard work, and sheer willpower, not external help or special relationships. I would argue that without a special relationship between two people, viz., parents, the self-made person would not exist. I would argue that education, even if it comes from one’s own reading and study, was written by someone who thought the ideas up. It’s the fantasy that we are self-creators that results in the rape of the environment, and the exploitation and manipulation of people, especially the disadvantaged and the marginalised who are seen as shirkers who are not making an effort to improve themselves. “We do not live to ourselves” (Romans 14:7).

We are the result of God’s continuing creative work within us. This has implications for the way we see ourselves, both in the world and the church. Do we see ourselves as consumers or as creatures? Not creatures in a demeaning sense but in the strict sense of created beings. Despite the growth in numbers of people who say they’re atheists, most people still, even if they don’t call themselves “Christians” or “religious” believe in a creator. It all couldn’t have just happen.

But the understanding of God is rather distant. It doesn’t have many implications for the way we live our lives. God’s work of creation is continuous. That’s vastly different from the idea of God finishing the job then checking out and leaving us to our own devices. It gives us hope and helps us face the future with confidence instead of dread.

If God’s work of creation is ongoing, before we ask, “What should we do?” we ask “What’s happening? Where is God working right now,” which leads to “Where can I join God in his work of creation?” God will keep creating whether we’re involved or not.

Tied to God’s work as creator, God is redeemer. The greatest work of continuing creation was the resurrection. Back in Easter the disciples thought the death of Jesus was the end. But the same God who created all things raised Jesus from the dead. The angel at the tomb didn’t say, “Sorry fellas, it’s all over. You’re too late.” The angel said, “He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him” (Mark 16:7). We can’t go anywhere God hasn’t been before us, as Fr Stephen reminded us last Sunday at Pentecost when the first settlers came here not knowing God was here already.

Theologian Jurgen Moltmann in his *Theology of Hope* says that some of our worst contemporary sins are fear and timidity. “Among the sinners whose future is eternal death in Revelation 21:8, the ‘fearful’ are mentioned before unbelievers, idolaters, murderers, and the rest.” If the more theologically conservative churches have a tendency towards triumphalism and pride, the more mainline churches may be prone to despair and timidity. Is that because we’ve lost the sense of God being in charge and active in his world?

When Jesus gave his Great Commission to the disciples as we heard in today’s Gospel, he didn’t send them forth to take him or carry him or his message to the world. He promised, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). He said before that: “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go *therefore*…” (v. 18).

Last Sunday we were reminded that the Holy Spirit is active in both the world *and* the church. God continues to create and to redeem. Jesus doesn’t hang around the cemetery. He’s off to Galilee. Remain in the safety and serenity of the cemetery and you’ll miss him. What cemeteries are we stuck in at the moment?

Knowing God is continually creating, redeeming and sanctifying, I don’t believe all the bad news stories about the church dying. In actual fact if a church *is* dying that’s good because there’s no resurrection without death. We are commanded to go because Jesus himself is on the move! We can’t follow him without moving also. We can’t be with Jesus if we don’t go with Jesus.

One hears all the time that the church is dying. We do have a problem as Anglicans bringing young people into the church. For a long time we contented ourselves with those we already had because when things are going well it’s easy to become complacent. We didn’t go where Jesus was and the results spoke for themselves.

In this month’s *Anglican Encounter*, Sue Williams has written a column about some of the good things that are happening in the Diocese – good news stories that serve to encourage and bring hope. Sue mentions the St James Ministry Centre at Wyong parish helping the disadvantaged and marginalised in that community. St Stephen’s Adamstown, and its relationship with the arts communities and the need for people with disabilities to have access to the buildings. St Mark’s Community at Islington, part of MICA, has plans to start conversational English with refugees. The year before last I spoke at “Explore,” the Anglican outreach at Newcastle University. I’ve been to many of the monthly theology dinners at St Mark’s. We share a meal, hear readings on the lives of heroes of the faith Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Hildegaard of Bingen, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, discuss the readings then pray the office of Compline at the end. At the last one I sat at a table with young people from Pentecostal, Anglican (both evangelical and catholic), Roman Catholic (who’d been to a Catholic charismatic conference), Baptist and Uniting Church talking about Mary MacKillop. All this takes place in a church building that was on the verge of closure.

Here at the Cathedral we’ve seen the formation of the Youth Chorale, the recommencement of the Family Eucharist on Saturday evenings. Last Saturday we saw members of the St Nicholas Choir receive medals and certificates. At the monthly BBQs it’s very gratifying to see parents of the choir members come along and through gentle hospitality see them gradually becoming more relaxed and at home and linking up with other parents.

Of course there’s a lot more happening here at the Cathedral, but all that to say that God is continuing and will continue to create and redeem and gather people to himself. There is constant movement in God the Holy Trinity. God’s ongoing creation issues from God’s being which is relational. For some time now the word *perichoriesis* has been used to describe this movement, this dance. It means in the Greek, “to dance around.” The Capaddocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, developed this relational understanding of the Trinity.

We are invited to participate in this dance, this movement which is unceasing. The life of the Trinity is characterised by mutual, self-giving love. As I read during the week, too often in our culture, “I love you” means “I love me and want to use you to love me more.” A final implication of our faith of God as Trinity then, is that being a Christian cannot happen in isolation. In baptism we’re asked to be in community with people we don’t know and may not even like. Like the Trinity, we’re then to reach out and gather others into this never-ending dance, this movement that fills the whole universe.

Fr Mark Watson  
Canon Pastor