

*From a contemporary writer:*

*(In the Eucharist) the Church sacrifices the Son to the Father, receives back from the Father the life of the Sacrificed, and taking it into herself, lets the Father sacrifice her in conjunction with the Son. We hurl ourselves into the blazing furnace which is the Holy Spirit. (Hans Urs von Balthasar).*



TRINITY, MYSTERY, EUCHARIST

*Thoughts from a  
Trinity Sunday homily  
given in the Convent chapel*

**A** homily for Trinity Sunday? Who has strength enough for such things, what can be said? We stand in awe, fall on our faces, sinners that we are, for the Trinity is mystery.

**Mystery** note, not a cold intellectual problem to tax the brain. Problems can be analysed and solved should we happen to be clever enough for this, but the Trinity is **mystery**, like something we know is there but is always a little further on; like an onion with an eternity of layers.

No, that's silly, and yet there are **tears** alright, tears of repentance, joy, awe, as the presence of God is uncovered before our very eyes.

Yes, the Trinity is mystery; something into which we enter. C.S. Lewis touches on this latter idea in one of his tales in the Nania series: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. You may perhaps recall how the children in the story discover a whole new world beyond the wardrobe door . . . so too with the Trinity, the mystery is like a kind of space, which we must enter imaginatively, but which continually eludes our attempts to get hold of it.

Yet mystery may choose at times to make **something** of itself known to

us. It will only be a tiny part of the whole all the same, even though *we* might take it for everything. We get so swept away that we can't see straight and so try to hold on to what is merely transitory, just a prelude to far greater and more wonderful insights. You know, like the young girl with her first boyfriend. He's *everything* to her, while everyone else knows it's only a passing fad. You just have to wait for her to see for herself that there is more in life than him. Just so, there is more to God than the consolations we feel, more to the mystery of the Trinity than we understand at this or any other moment.

So if a preacher is tempted to say anything at all about the Trinity it is simply in order that it may be dismissed, because the mystery which is God is something far beyond our understanding or our imagination. At the moment we think we've got it all sorted out well then, most likely we've got it all wrong. Or if by a God-given insight we might in some sense be right, the mere fact of putting it into words means that we are looking at it through a magnifying glass that is upside down; we are making God smaller when he needs to be made bigger.

In the face of mystery, therefore, this particular preacher gives up, or rather bows down since he is out of his depth. He doesn't know what to say. But then that is right too because God is absolutely and totally beyond human comprehension.

Despite all this, the impulse to say something specific, on this particular occasion, won't let itself be gainsaid, an urge that the curtain should be drawn momentarily aside for us to glimpse at least a vestige of the mystery, if God should so permit.

What seems to need saying is that *the Eucharist is Trinitarian*. This actual celebration that is taking place now is Trinitarian, and that not merely because it is Trinity Sunday. Every Eucharist at any time or place is in fact Trinitarian, since our faith is Trinitarian and

that faith is epitomised and actualised in the Eucharist. As it is sometimes put: '*The Eucharist makes the Church.*'

It is Jesus who prays the Eucharist, and who calls us to join him in his self-offering by lifting up our hearts, and offering ourselves and the universe, together with Jesus, to God the Father. We can't do that in our own strength. It is the Spirit who empowers us to do so. Moreover, to see the Eucharist as Trinitarian involves our seeing Jesus as part of the dynamic saving partnership of the all-holy God himself into whose kingdom we are being called. Our God is Trinitarian Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in himself and for himself, as well as in and for us in creation and redemption. He actually calls us into ultimate union with his very self, to share by adoption in his own three-fold life of mutual indwelling. Of this the Eucharist is the pledge.

Thus God is our destination. God's Son is the one who calls us, and God's Spirit energises us to go into the space from whence the voice calls. Let us respond with our whole being, our whole life, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### *Quotations from the Fathers:*

*It is difficult to conceive God but to define him in words is impossible.* (Gregory Nazianzen).

*God is infinite and incomprehensible, and all that is comprehensible about him is his infinity and incomprehensibility.* (John Damascene).

*My eyes have been blinded by the light of the Trinity, whose brightness surpasses all that the mind can conceive . . . This is the source of all that is here below.* (Gregory Nazianzen).