



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Most Holy Trinity 2024 - Year B

The Singular Plural

*Readings: Deuteronomy 4: 32-34, 39-40, Ps 32, Romans 8: 14-17,
Matthew 28: 16-20*

In ancient times the mystery of the divine was explained, in so far as it could be, in simplistic and humanly recognisable terms. The 'gods' were seen as a kind of court of superhuman beings intervening in human affairs, often in a way of questionable morality, and treating human beings, in the much later and gloomy words of Shakespeare's Gloucester in King Lear, as mere playthings: 'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport.'

In this bleak assessment of the divine, the supernatural powers that rule the Universe are not the loving creators, making Man in their own image, seeking His salvation and offering sacrificial love, but merely projections of the worst of fallen man.

This Pan Theon – a god for every purpose – a dysfunctional family of divinities- is the heart of paganism. The divine is not to be admired but rather feared and placated. Its relationship to Man is not loving but exploitative.

The first substantial breakthrough against this grim perception of the divine occurs, as far as we know, in the reign of the Pharaoh Akhenaten – 14 th century BC. Akhenaten revealed that there was only One God and tried to establish this truth in his kingdom. So violent was the rejection of this, to us, self - evident truth that every effort was made, by the vested interests in the state and in the pagan priesthood, to extirpate his memory and his 'heretical folly' from the annals of Egyptian history. The Biblical account of the revelation of Monotheism is much earlier, both in the Creation account, the call of Abraham and the ministry of Moses. The definitive moment comes at the Bush of Fire and the subsequent proclamation of the uniqueness of God becomes the defining feature of Judaism and indeed the three religions that claim their origin in Abraham.

For the Jew, as for the follower of Mohammed, that monotheism is simple and uncomplicated by the seemingly incomprehensible mystery of the Christian claim to that paradox, One God – Three Persons – Glorious Trinity.

Any apologia for the doctrine of the Trinity will begin by confessing that it is not subject to any limited human rationality but certainly could not have been invented by mere human thought. At the end of all our enquiry it will remain, in the proper sense of the word, a mystery. We only know that this is the case because God has revealed this to us. This is made clear to us in the Creation account itself. The Creator/Father God speaks His Creative Word and then the brooding Spirit brings order out of primal chaos.

Further evidence of the Trinity may be adduced from the use of the 'royal' plural. 'Let US make Man on our own image'.

The Godhead is not polytheistic but rather relational within His very nature. Thus we, as made in the image of God, are able to have a relationship with Him. He is neither the terrifying judgemental tyrant of one stream of consequential thought nor the uniquely tribal of the other. When Holy Scripture speaks of God's love for His people in Spousal/Marriage terms, that is no accident nor poetic licence but rather a revelation of the investment of supreme intimacy which He has made with humanity. One cannot overstate the extraordinary nature of this statement.

Christianity takes the next step in that logic of love by acknowledging that the Divine has incarnated in Man in Christ, in human history and in our mortality in order that Man may be not simply reinstated to Paradise but to be lifted up into the very divine Himself. The aim of Communion is Union. This (Apotheosis), the eventual divinisation of reconciled and restored and purified fallen Man is the highest doctrine of God and the highest doctrine of Man.

This is only possible if the Holy Trinity is a reality. Anything less and the Faith is nothing but a wishful blasphemy and supreme exercise in hubris. We may be reassured not only by the evidence of the Creation account and the subsequent love story that is salvation history but by the experience of the Baptism of Christ when the Father spoke, acknowledging the Son while the Spirit descended.

As St Augustine said: 'Go to the Jordan and behold the Trinity.'

The Mysterium of the Three Persons – One God is not subject to mere human explanation but accessible only through revelation and the experience of that amazing love. We are invited not merely to attend this wedding of God and Man, which is Jesus Christ, but to participate in that adventure which is the endless journey of love into the heart of the other.