

About the Readings on 5.26.24

The Holy Trinity

Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday following Pentecost (which is a day, not a season), has been kept since the tenth century as a special celebration of the mystery of the triune God, as in a similar way the Baptism of Our Lord follows the Christmas season with its trinitarian focus. Perhaps it is not helpful to begin a sermon by talking in a deprecatory manner about doctrine: trinitarian doctrine accompanies the Bible and the Christian poetic expressions of the ages to propose some language with which to praise our incomprehensible God. In all three readings, God welcomes us, who are sinners, persons who are perishing and who are saved in our experience of God as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Isaiah 6:1-8

On Trinity Sunday, Isaiah's vision calls us to experience the overpowering presence of the almighty God. If our language about God has not left us speechless, it has not worked well to articulate divine power and mercy. Christians have seen in the triple "Holy" an oblique reference to the Trinity (see Rev. 4:8). Like Isaiah, we encounter God in worship, and like Isaiah, we are sent.

The Psalm for the Day

Having heard Isaiah's transformative vision, we respond by singing **Psalm 29**, which praises the Lord, that is YHWH, with phrases that appear to have been adapted by the Israelites from the worship of the Canaanite weather deity Baal. The psalm moves from the image of a storm god to one who blesses the people with peace. Thus the psalm parallels the movement of Isaiah 6.

Romans 8:12-17

This passage from Paul contains early trinitarian theology. God is addressed as Abba, which probably meant "Papa." Christ "the Son" ensures our adoption as sons and daughters. The Spirit enlivens our prayers. For Paul, we are already dead and have been made alive in Christ.

John 3:1-17

On Trinity Sunday, Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus presents us with John's language for the triune God: God; the Son, who is the only begotten one; and the Spirit, of whom the believers are born. This is expansive imagery of God: the Spirit of God as a womb amplifies the language of God as the Father of the Son.