

SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

Trinity Sunday

Year B

30 May 2021



Collect

God our Father, who by sending into the world
the Word of truth and the Spirit of sanctification
made known to the human race your wondrous mystery,
grant us, we pray, that in professing the true faith,
we may acknowledge the Trinity of eternal glory
and adore your Unity, powerful in majesty.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

Now that Pentecost Sunday has brought the Easter festival to a close, we resume our journey through Ordinary Time. The first part of this season, occupying the period between Christmas and Lent, is always quite short. It lasts for somewhere between five and nine Sundays, depending on when Ash Wednesday occurs. This second and much longer part lasts roughly about six months, spanning the period between the seasons of Easter and Advent. Not every Sunday during this stage is observed as Ordinary Time. To start with, the first two Sundays after Pentecost are always celebrated as the feasts of the Holy Trinity and of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi). Every year the readings for these two festivals replace those for the Sundays of Ordinary Time. This means that over the years we hear the readings for the Sixth to the Twelfth Sundays of Ordinary Time much less often than the rest.

In addition, in some years other feasts, such as Saints Peter and Paul, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and All Saints, can fall on a Sunday and take precedence on that day. Nonetheless, after Trinity and Corpus Christi, the vast majority of the Sundays in the second part of Ordinary Time are observed as such.

The mystery of the Trinity can be approached as a theological conundrum or as an adventure in faith. The word of God invites us to take the latter route. The readings for the day help us retrace some of the steps taken by our forebears in faith as they were led to discover Father, Son and Spirit communing in the one Godhead and enfolding the whole of creation in their love.

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy
4:32–34, 39–40

Moses said to the people: 'Put this question to the ages that are past, that went before you, from the time God created man on earth: Was there ever a word so majestic, from one end of heaven to the other? Was anything ever heard? Did ever a people hear the voice of the living God speaking from the heart of the fire, as you heard it, and remain alive? Has any god ventured to take to himself one nation from the midst of another by ordeals, signs, wonders, war with mighty hand and outstretched arm, by fearsome terrors - all this that the Lord your God did for you before your eyes in Egypt?

'Understand this today, therefore, and take it to heart: The Lord is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other. Keep his laws and commandments as I give them to you today so that you and your children may prosper and live long in the land that the Lord your God gives you for ever.'

First Reading

The book of Deuteronomy is the last of the five first books of the Bible known collectively as the Pentateuch. The title of the book comes from the Greek word for "second law-giving". It presents the teaching of Moses on the laws (or words) given by God to shape the life of his chosen people Israel. Moses devotes himself at length to explaining the law; its observance will bring blessing to Israel and give witness to God before the nations.

Today's reading is an extract from Moses' first discourse. For all but the last sentence Moses is calling upon the people to remember their unique experience of God and be amazed. They have come to know the one true God, absolutely transcendent and at the same time passionately engaged on his people's behalf: "The Lord is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other". The God who has created everything is the one who has chosen and saved them by his awesome power (note that four verses which elaborate on this have been omitted from the passage). The last verse of the reading draws the conclusion. To remain safe and to prosper in the Promised Land, Israel must observe the law that God has given. The passage as a whole thus places obedience to the Mosaic law in the context of God's self-revelation to Israel as the living God.

This solemn teaching on the uniqueness of Israel's God should help reader and congregation alike to see how difficult it would have been for Jesus' contemporaries to grasp how he, a human being, could be acclaimed as Son of God. The text calls for proclamation with authority and dignity. The rhetorical questions should not be hurried through. A short pause after each one will allow the congregation to take it to heart without the reader losing control of the rising dramatic tension. The whole reading comes to its climax in the final two sentences.

Responsorial Psalm **Ps 32:4-6, 9, 18-20, 22**

R. Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

The word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.
The Lord loves justice and right
and fills the earth with his love. R.

By his word the heavens were made,
by the breath of his mouth all the stars.
He spoke: and they came to be.
He commanded; they sprang into being. R.

The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine. R.

Our soul is waiting for the Lord.
The Lord is our help and our shield.
May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you. R.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 32/33 is a joyful song of praise to God as Creator and as Lord of history; in the course of the three-year cycle it appears on a few Sundays in Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time.

The response is adapted from a verse in the middle of the psalm. It forges a direct and explicit connection with the first reading and establishes a joyful spirit for the verses that follow. Taken together these form a confession of faith in God as creator and redeemer, leading to the confident prayer of the final two lines. The tone of the whole psalm is one of joy, faith and gratitude. The language is clear and simple, and the verses are all in four short lines. The reader should be able to proclaim them with assurance.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

8:14–17

Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

28:16–20

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

Second Reading

This short passage from Paul's great letter to the Romans is an entry point into the unfolding mystery of God. His references to the Spirit, to Abba-Father, and to Christ anticipate the Church's later mature understanding of God as three in persons and one in nature.

They also testify to our high calling. We participate in the communion of love that Father, Son and Spirit ceaselessly share. We are not passive onlookers mesmerised by what we see. We are drawn as active players into the dynamic of a divine love that fully embraces our humanity. Not only are we liberated from the slavery of fear but, enlightened by the Spirit, we know ourselves to be free-born daughters and sons. We are moved to address God with child-like trust as Abba, Father.

There is a final warning note, however. If we are to share in the glory of the risen Christ, we must first be willing to walk the way of the cross with him.

These few verses provide us with an opportunity to experience once again the stirring of the Spirit, activating the mystery of God deep within us. This will be more likely to happen if readers understand they are not just delivering an ancient text but communicating a divine revelation – a wonderful privilege indeed. On a more practical note they will check out the inclusive language of the NRSV.

Gospel

The gospel text consists of the last five verses of Matthew's gospel. They report Jesus' final appearance to his disciples and his commission to them to "make disciples of all nations" and to baptise "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". This Trinitarian formula is exceptional in the New Testament; its inclusion here may reflect the baptismal practice of Matthew's own community. Baptism, as the Church will come to understand, is our induction into the divine wellspring of life and love.

As is the case with many of the stories of Jesus' appearances after his resurrection, there is a tantalising degree of obscurity and ambiguity. Why did Jesus direct them to Galilee (28:10)? On what mountain are they meeting and what significance might this have? Why were some overcome with awe while others hesitated?

There is mystery: the enigmatic figure of the Son of Man in the prophet Daniel (7:13-14) is evoked by Jesus' claim to "all authority in heaven and on earth". There is paradox too: Jesus is to become absent even as he promises his disciples to be "with you always; yes, to the end of time".

Nonetheless, Jesus' commission to the Eleven is crystal clear. They are sent on a universal mission, with a mandate to teach and to baptise. The whole gospel concludes as it began: with the absolute assurance of the enduring presence of Emmanuel, God with us.

Solemn Blessing

May the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
keep our hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.
Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time II, Roman Missal p 715.)