Lectio Divina – Feast of The Trinity - Year A

Contexts

John’s Gospel – in brief

* **Structure of John’s Gospel**

**1:1-18:** **Prologue** – An introduction to and summary of the career of the incarnate Word.

**1:19-12:50: Part One: The Book of Signs**: the **Word reveals himself to the world** and to his own, but they do not accept him.

**Chapter 6** – Jesus, the Bread of Life is right in the middle of The Book of Signs – a central text in more ways than one!

**13:1-20:31: Part Two: The Book of Glory**: To those who accept him, the Word shows his glory by returning to the Father in death, resurrection and ascension. Fully glorified, he communicates the Spirit of life.

**21:1-25: Epilogue**: Galilean resurrection appearances and second conclusion.

* It is the only Gospel to call Jesus “God”.
* Purpose of Gospel is so that those who follow Jesus might have the kind of faith that would give them eternal life, namely, the faith that Jesus was God’s only Son, possessing God’s own life and had come into the world from above that people might be given that life (and thus be begotten by God) and become God’s children. (Raymond Brown SS)
* Jesus is ‘The Bread of Life’ who feeds, nourishes and sustains the children of God.

John 3: 16-18 – things to notice

* Part of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus – a sympathetic (but unbelieving) Jewish leader and teacher. His journey to believing begins in chapter 3 but is not concluded. Nicodemus will appear again in 7:50 pleading with the Pharisees that Jesus be given a hearing. He reappears at the burial of Jesus (19:39) bringing aloes and myrrh to anoint Jesus’ body.
* *God loved the world so much* – love is primary motivating factor for God’s action
* *that he gave his only son* – the perfect image of himself
* *so that those who believe may have eternal life* – God’s desire to share full life with his creatures, who were made in God’s own image and likeness.
* *not to condemn (Greek: judge) the world* – God’s has no interest in condemning and punishing; only in giving life and salvation by sharing his love and inviting people into his ‘covenant of love’.
* *No one who believes will be condemned (Greek: judged)*
* *whoever refuses to believe is condemned* *(judged)* –it simply means that it is impossible to enter into ‘life’ without the relationship which belief pre-supposes. Jesus is not making a broad statement against non-believers. Remember that these words are in the context of a conversation with Nicodemus (possibly representing all Jews) who is sincerely trying to find his way to God. He is intrigued by Jesus, and struggling with believing hin him given his background and learning as a Pharisee.

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on this Sunday?

First Reading from Exodus – *God’s tenderness and love; God as companion on the journey; God adopts the people as his own*: Moses goes up the mountain of Sinai to meet with God as God has commanded. God descends and they meet in a cloud – *a God who draws close to his people*. Moses names God as a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger and rich in mercy. Then Moses offers a simple, heartfelt and beautiful prayer asking God to ‘come with us’. In the prayer he acknowledges the faults and failings of his people, but asks God none the less to ‘adopt us as your heritage’ – that is, ‘make us your children’.

Second Reading the final words of the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians – *how members of the Christian community are to act towards one another:* be happy, try to grow perfect, help one another, be united, live in peace – do this and God will dwell among you. Greet each other with the Holy Kiss – the liturgical gesture of peace. The intention to be at peace with one another must be incarnated (enfleshed, made real, both within and outside of the liturgy). Final verse contains an early Trinitarian formulae: *grace of Christ, love of God, fellowship of Holy Spirit.*

It is good to remember that from the creation story in Genesis we understand that being made in the image and likeness of God is both individual *and* collective. The words, ‘male and female he created them’ point to an understanding that *together* we are the image and likeness of God. Perhaps Paul understood the implications of this for his Christian communities. They are always to act in the image and likeness of God.

Our return to the Ordinary Time of the Church year is marked by three feasts: Pentecost (last Sunday), Trinity (today) and the Body and Blood of Christ (next Sunday).

In a way, it is as though we are celebrating God in the three persons who are revealed to us by faith – Pentecost: The Holy Spirit; Trinity: God; and the Body & Blood of Jesus: Jesus.

These feasts celebrate our faith in God and the enduring presence of Christ in the Church and the world through the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist.

In intellectual terms, God remains a mystery. For people of faith, God is known not by the mind, but by the heart. That is what spirituality and mysticism are about - our experience of God.

Through our public liturgy, private prayer and contemplation we come to experience - to ‘know’ and feel in our hearts - that God loves us, accepts us, forgives us and constantly invites us into an

ever deeper experience of love.

When we allow God’s heart to speak to ours in love we begin to absorb more of God’s life into our own. Our values and attitudes, our ways of looking at and being in the world start to change. We begin to see with God’s eyes and feel with God’s heart. We are being transformed. We become passionate about the things God is passionate about: speaking truthfully, acting with justice and integrity, looking out for each other and especially for the vulnerable, promoting peace and understanding, ending competition and discrimination, respecting life. That makes us better people and our lives become a blessing for each other and for the world.

That is what it means to live out of God’s greatest gift to us, the Spirit of Jesus Christ which God has placed in our hearts. God becomes *enfleshed* in us and we become stewards of God’s grace and life.