Devotional for Trinity Sunday Year A During the Covid-19 Pandemic
(2 Corinthians 13:11-13; cf. Matthew 28:16-20)

So, think of the variety of people in your family, your children if you have some, your brothers and sisters, your partner if you have one. Think of their personalities, their gifts, their weaknesses, their joys and their sufferings.

Now begin to draw that out a bit, think of our community, with it’s different cultures, skin colours, think of the different sexual orientations, of the different education levels, the different types of problems people face and you begin to feel overwhelmed but also you can sense joy, passion and hope in all that diversity.

And as you think about our world in which all of this continues to unfold, a world in which problems don’t get solved in any kind of linear fashion, where racism and sexism and discrimination still seem to have as much power and violence as ever.

A world in which progress gets made in some areas while in other areas in which there once was progress things seem to be going backward e.g. think, for instance, of the suspicion with which many people now hold for a word like “facts;” a world in which past performance is no guarantee of future success as our financial advisors always, and rightly, remind us!

It is with that introduction that I then ask this question “what does it look like for God to act with and for such a world?” For this is the question that faces us on the first Sunday of what the Great Tradition has called “Ordinary Time.” And on this first Sunday we stop to remind ourselves of the answer to that question and we point in our rear view mirror to the Church Year from Advent 1 to Pentecost and we say, that’s what it would like.

And at the same time we point forward and say, and this “God who chooses to become human while remaining fully God, fully that which is beyond even while being underneath and in all Creation” will now continue to work with us in the most practical ways, inviting us, instructing us, helping us reflect that divine humanness in a world that is as diverse and mixed up and beautiful as ever!

And we call this story of how God becomes human, and this looking forward to how God will manifest that humanness in and through us: The Mystery of the Holy Trinity!

It’s like when you’ve gone to see a famous scientist or historian or philosopher give a public lecture and as you sit there listening you’re enthralled, you’re amazed but even so, it’s all a bit over your head and then, like any good teacher, the lecturer says and “now to summarize” and as you listen to the summary you think, “ah, now I get it,” and you realize how the summary enables you to understand the different points of the lecture that were difficult as well enabling you to take that content out into the world.

When the Church comes to the aftermath of Pentecost she says, “and now in summary” and the content of that summary is “Holy Trinity” and though “Trinity” was never mentioned in the entire story till after the fact you realize that it helps you understand the complex story we’ve been telling each other for the past 6 months and it will help us develop that story in “ordinary time,” in the beautiful and mixed-up lives we lead in the beautiful and mixed-up world in our towns and nations!

So however and whenever “Trinity” is mentioned, and sometimes it’s mentioned in terms of a rich philosophical tradition, other times as simply as one clover, with it’s three leaves, it’s not something separate, different or abstract from the story, it’s an attempt to summarize the story.

Another way of putting it is this: this is a word summarizes what we say about God now that we’ve experienced Jesus and because it’s Jesus who draws the world into the Living God, it’s a word that summarizes what we say when talk we about *our lives* in this God.

The Gospel says this wonderfully: by being drenched with this reality in our baptism and by being knotted together with this God and with each other in baptism we’re sent into God’s world in God’s way

But this morning I’m focusing on Paul’s famous blessing. Because we “Great Tradition Christians” have turned it into a greeting and a way to end our meetings, we may not know that it’s taken from the New Testament: “The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore!”

This beautiful blessing/prayer starts with Grace. The reason anything exists, the reason we are creatures with human capacities is Grace. Taking it one step further, when we soil ourselves with sin—sorry for the image but that’s what we do—God freely and lovingly works *for* us and because God works for us, we can be sure that God is working *in and through* us! That’s Grace!

And it is Jesus who demonstrates this Grace of God supremely for us; he becomes humble and poor *for* us, embodying Grace, not to pay back an angry god, but to open up, from the inside, as it were, the door to access with God which ignorance, shame and sin has blocked up.

Behind this Grace is the active love of God. In the NT, God’s love, is not simply one aspect of the divine character, but the actual identity of God. We need to pause here for this is what explains the necessity of Jesus, not that someone had to pay an angry God off, but that someone, some human being would somehow need to unblock the door so that humanity might see this love.

For we need to remind ourselves that in the ancient world the belief in a God of Love was only found within Jewish and Christian understanding. You will search high and low in the pagan world for any god or goddess that showed consistent covenant love. You’ll find a god here and there who might be bought off by a huge sacrifice or a god who might show a moment’s pity

But human societies were full of anxiety that comes from a fear of superhuman forces that were *not* loving but capricious, committed to one group but not another, trying to gain advantage over you if you weren’t careful. To reiterate, none of the multiple options in that most pluralist of religious worlds spoke of a single God whose innermost nature was the love demonstrated by Yhwh, the Father of Jesus!

Now, just to be clear, this shouldn’t surprise us, because if one looks outside of revelation and tries to understand divinity one will no doubt be awed by the heavens and creation and thus come up with an understanding of superpowers beyond human ken; but one will also be struck by what I opened with, that amidst all our diversities nobody avoids suffering though some seem to suffer inordinately. Many ancients concluded that divinity could hardly be loving.

But Judaism clung to this as a revelatory hope and Christianity claimed that it had been fulfilled on the Cross; that humanity could rely on a loving God and fully trust that Love to guide, heal and to put everything right at the last.

This promise of embrace now and later changes how we understand God and what we can expect from human life and even what we imagine humanity to be. In Christ, we are on a journey coming to trust that God will never let us go and, as a result, that we can learn to reflect the image of God’s love and that amidst all humanity’s diversity. There is no one outside of this love!

This is why when we say “the Grace,” it’s a prayer! It’s a relationship that has started but needs our ongoing “yes.”

The third part of the blessings says that we are joined in a vast *koinonia,* a communion, not based on anything but Grace. This is the Spirit of God at work among us, not a ghost, but the promise of communion which is a participation in each other, a sharing, a fellowship of strength, an interchange of the very love demonstrated to us in Christ!

This means of course, that we need to actively reach out to embrace this communion. We live in segregated communities, not of law but of choice: siloes and neighbourhoods of whites, indigenous, south Asian, and in different parts of our country black people, all in their own communities. We are not a society in *koinonia* though we like to imagine that we are.

The emphasis of the Christian Story of God’s relationship in the world is not authoritarian or law motivated though it respects it and values authority that acts with integrity; fundamentally it is a communal and personal story, a story in which small communities and people live into the Mystery of Grace, Love and Communion, in which, together we welcome difference, diversity, in which we extend Grace, Love and fellowship to those unlike us. We reflect, we image God’s hospitality or we betray our story! We stand with all oppressed, not in word, but in welcome! We too were or are oppressed and God welcomes us!

And so Trinity is a practical summary, it describes God’s story and it tells us what our story can be and will be! To look at vs. 11-12, just prior to the blessing, it helps to embrace the small and mundane details of our lives with new vigour; the celebration, the putting things in order, thinking together, practicing peace and hospitality, these things are hugely enlarged when we see them as small expressions of God’s infinite Love and Grace; rather than things simply forgotten they become the things that last

For none of the plural gods of the ancient world lasted and none of the modern gods that promise so much, whether fame, money or power will last, will they?

Indeed only faith, hope and love will last and the greatest of these is Love and that’s because when we name it we name God’s Life for and in us: The Trinity