

One of the opportunities of the lockdown has been to read some of the books that have been on my bookshelves for many years. For example, I am currently reading St Augustine's Confessions. It is actually an easier read than I thought it might be. The inside cover picture page in the edition I am reading shows a copy of a painting depicting a legendary vision of St Augustine. He is walking along a beach, dressed in his episcopal finery, meditating on the Trinity. He comes across a child spooning water into a hole in the sand and he remarks on the futility of this occupation. The child replied that he could sooner put the whole ocean into the hole that Augustine could understand the Trinity.

The Trinity is not a problem to be understood but a mystery that we are invited to enter into. The child is right, this is a process that will take a lifetime. Today's Feast is not an attempt to solve a puzzle or understand a problem but an invitation to enter into this mystery more deeply. The readings that the Church offers us in the liturgy guide us on that journey, both in pointing out the way and also in pointing out wrong paths to avoid.

In the First Reading (Exodus 34:4-6.8-9) the Lord reveals himself to Moses as 'a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness' (but do note the omitted verse 7!). This should help us to avoid any simplistic 'Old Testament - bad, New Testament - good' comparisons that we are sometimes tempted to make. Already in the Hebrew Scriptures God has revealed himself to be 'a God of tenderness and compassion, a God of kindness, faithfulness, and forgiveness.

The Gospel Reading (John 3:16-18) begins with what is sometimes described as the key verse of the Bible 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.' This should help us avoid setting up any opposition between a vengeful Father looking for punishment and Jesus as the Son who protects us from the Father's wrath. The work of saving the world is the activity of the whole Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it is a work done out of love and for no other reason.

The Second Reading (2 Cor 13:11-13) contains the prayer that we often call 'the grace': 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all'. It seems to be a prayer often used at the end of ecumenical meetings and often with people looking round the room at one another in the eye as we pray that we may all share in this grace. It is a prayer we can make our own today, especially if we can imagine ourselves sat in our usual place at church and keep in our minds those who usually sit near us whether we know their names or not.

I am sure we are all aware that the reason we can't be in church together and do many other things we usually do is because of a very serious pandemic which still continues to threaten health and life. We pray for all those who have been directly affected and for all those who are working hard to keep us safe. We pray especially for our parish schools that have remained open throughout the national lockdown for the children of key workers but are now preparing to welcome back more pupils and students.

May the Holy Trinity guide us and support us as we continue our own journeys into the mystery of God's love for the world and for each and every one of us.