

2nd May 2010

We all understand 'What a glorious day!' but otherwise we don't use the word 'glory' much in daily life, restricting it to religious life where it usually means 'the **visible** brightness of the divine presence' - the glory of the Lord in prophetic visions, 'glory shone around' as the angels sang, and Jesus shone in glory on the mountaintop..

St John regarded the whole of **Jesus' life on earth as an embodiment of the glory of God**, though that glory is revealed only to the disciples and not to the world. Jesus' life and ministry on earth are a promise of the unveiling of glory to come. Jesus needed to enter into the completeness of his glory by suffering and death. St John calls the time of Jesus' death, the hour of his glorification. John 13.31-32 is a little hymn expressing John's understanding of the glory in Jesus on earth, and the glory to come in death, resurrection and when all things will come under his reign—an idea reflected in psalm 148 and portrayed in the vision in Revelations 21.1-6

Through the Easter events, God's kingdom is now inaugurated and we wait for its fulfillment—it is now and not yet. How is this visible brightness manifested? Jesus' instruction to be a loving Christian community is one way. Christ imparts his glory into our communities and our glory should be visible. (They'll know we are Christians by our love). Christ imparts his glory into our mission so that others may see his glory and share in it (cf. Acts 11.1-18).

The words of the hymn—"cast out our sin and enter in/be born In us today/O come to us, abide with us/our Lord Emmanuel" are apt. **The indwelling Spirit of God** in each of us and in our church community will shine forth God's glory. It is not so much what we do as who we are, allowing Christ to dwell in us richly, so that our light shines forth the glory of God. Our prayer is that we let God's glory be revealed in us and through us. (Give examples of community life and mission).

9th May 2010

“**We will come to them and make our home with them**” is a promise fulfilled at Easter -John shows us the risen Christ conveying the gift of the Spirit to his disciples on Easter day. In this gift of the Spirit, God abides in the disciples to teach them all things and to bring to mind all that Jesus had said to them. The Spirit conveys ever new understandings, ever new interpretations and applications of Jesus' life and Jesus' teaching.

Abiding with his disciples the Spirit gave the disciples peace and took away their fear. The Spirit gave the disciples courage to move out of Jerusalem to neighbouring lands. Last week we heard how the Spirit took the initiative giving Peter the vision to reach out to the gentile world through Cornelius, an influential Roman. This week we see the Spirit giving Paul the vision of ministry in Macedonia, (Acts 16.9-15) convincing him that God had called them to proclaim the good news there. And we hear that the Spirit was the source of revelation of the vision of the New Jerusalem, in part a vision for the Church, with the foundation of the twelve apostles, but at the heart the temple which is Christ himself.

‘O Holy Spirit in the Church today/no less your power of fellowship display/ Now with the mind of Christ set us on fire’ so wrote John Peacey (1896-1971) in his hymn. The words are still relevant today. Where particularly can we pray that the Spirit of God set us on fire? In mission in our own backyard? In addressing the issues of poverty, famine and lack of fairness in the world's use of resources,? In treatment of homosexuals in the Church and society? In dealing with compassion on refugees? In helping us really to believe that God's Spirit is with us? In helping us to have the conviction of faith move into action? In helping us to resist the forces in the world, consumerism, personality cult, and so on which stop us focusing on Christ. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit abide with us and take away our fear so that our lives and actions may show forth the glory of God.

30th May 2010

Today we celebrate God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is implicit rather than explicit in the Bible. It grew out of Christian experience in the early years of the Church; people looked back into Old Testament times and found that their knowledge of God was also triune; and today, if we reflect on our experience of God, we will discover that that is how we know God too.

If we sum up our understanding we can say God reaches out in creation and redemption and enables us to respond. Our readings express this: God discloses himself in wisdom (Prov.8); human being is the crown of creation and we exist in the image of God (Psalm 8); God redeems us through Jesus and we experience this redemption through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5); and the Spirit will make this revelation clear through succeeding generations (John 16).

The language and concept of the Trinity are very difficult. But Christians cannot get by with only the word “God”. We have a richer, more personal, more dynamic, experience of God than a view which puts God as sovereign, transcendent, distant and unknowable. The doctrine of the Trinity tries to elucidate the understanding we have of God through the Bible and in our Christian community through the ages.

So how do we know God as Trinity today? When we start to seek meaning in life, a search for sense and grace, we encounter God whom we find has been reaching out to us, helping us to understand our experience. When you stand in awe and wonder at creation, realizing that you are nothing beside the one who made heaven and earth, then you know that a greater Being exists. When you fall short of the potential that you know you have to be more fully human, a potential evident in the one who was fully human, Jesus, and you receive forgiveness and a new determination to live a life more purposefully in the service of others, then you have an experience of God's redemption. Creation, revelation, salvation—the experience of the Trinity.

These are things of human experience. Are they your experience? Over the next week you might think of how you know God as Father, Son and Spirit.

23rd May 2010

I will ask the father and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. (John 14.16) The Greek word paraclete means 'one who speaks in favour of another', 'an intercessor', 'helper', 'consoler'. We can find times when these synonyms all can be identified and the richness of our understanding of the Spirit grows.

John places the giving of the Spirit on Easter Day and The Acts story (Acts 2.1-21) shows the Spirit empowering the Church for her mission. John 14.8-17, 25-27) also tells us something of the Spirit: the Spirit of truth, the Spirit abiding in a believer, teacher who reveals the truth about Jesus, peace bringer. How do you know the Spirit?

Perhaps you have felt the power of the Spirit to teach as you have listened to God together and there has been a time of new insight. Perhaps in prayer you have felt unworthy but have felt the power of the Spirit interceding with the Father. Perhaps in worship you have experienced true adoration (Those who worship, worship in Spirit and in truth). Perhaps in action you have felt the energy, direction, and enthusiasm—a spirit of purpose which can come only from God. Perhaps in comfort in a time of sorrow. Perhaps in strength when you got through a difficult time.

Pentecost, the Jewish harvest festival, a time for celebrating the results of their labour, received new meaning when the disciples felt the power of the Spirit to move them into action, to speak of their belief, to begin the missionary movement which was to change the world. Together they moved from a paralysis to action, from silence to speech. So revolutionary was the experience they could explain it only in metaphors. It was mind-boggling! What does this mean, sneered a bystander. Peter's response showed how the Spirit 'gave him utterance', understanding, courage, and strength for leadership in this time of 'harvest', fully aware that it was God's mission and they were empowered by the Spirit.

May we, in our churches, have such a Pentecost experience. May we move from lack of comprehension to insight., from immobility to action, from silence to speaking out and in confidence in our risen Lord bring his Spirit to others.

16th May 2010

Most partings and farewells contain an element of sadness, especially those of people we expect not to see again. The ascension marks a farewell which is different. Christ's earthly ministry has come to an end, the tension of antagonism is over, the horror of the crucifixion is past. This parting leaves the disciples rejoicing for from that time Christ will be with them in a new way. He leaves them with his blessing and with the promise of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Risen, ascended, glorified—the ascension is an integral part of the Easter mystery. We keep this separation in our liturgical observance today in order to focus on this particular aspect of this mystery—the entry of Christ into divine glory. The beginning of a new stage of mission

The writer of Luke and Acts presents two different aspects of the truth. In Acts 1.1-11 he looks to the future and the beginning of the mission and the final return of Christ. In Luke 24.44-53, we see his understanding of salvation history. God's action in the history of the Jewish people is now extended to see salvation stretching out through the mission of the Church to the gentiles, to the whole world, a mission which will conclude in the coming again of Christ. It is Christ's mission, the mission of the risen and ascended king. The realm of Christ exists in ever-widening circles, beginning with the church extending out to the world to those who do not yet know him. That mission continues today.

One of our self-deceptions is to think mission all depends on us. Ephesians 1.15-23 clearly places Christ as the cornerstone of the household of God, upon whom, and in whom all believers are bound together into the dwelling place of God, whose power leads us into mission. The celebrations for Ascension Day affirm that Christ is King, they affirm and encourage our understanding of the Church as a mystical body held together by the Spirit of God, and they inspire us to our citizenship with the saints and with others in this great household of God in which we belong.