Trinity Sunday, St Mary’s Church, Howth June 7th 2020

Sermon on The Blessing for Trinity Sunday

By the time we reach The Blessing in a Sunday Service, we probably have had plenty. Whatever the hopes, fears, preoccupations and thanksgivings we brought with us into church – whether this be actual or virtual, digital or physical, it is still church – these hopes and preoccupations have been met by the wide range of what church gives us during the service: the gathering of other people; the being included in Scripture, Prayer and Response; the time to align ourselves with God for the week ahead. We might ask: Have we not been blessed? and: Have we not blessed one another already? I would agree that we have. This I would never deny; this is part of the exhilaration of worship and this is part of why, The Roadmap: Reopening Ireland Provisional Plan permitting, so many of us want to be back in the church building itself. We need to be compliant with the Health Regulations. We need to be busy preparing our churches for the return. We need to be adapting what are workplace requirements to our own church building. Above all, we need to keep others safe and stay safe, however itchy our feet during COVID 19.

So, what of The Blessing? The Blessing in a very direct way connects us with God The Trinity. It sends us out in that concentration of faith, hope and love that together make up the food for the journey of life that will unfold in the week ahead. In my own work, I have found myself saying The Blessing with people in the most unusual, yet appropriate, of circumstances and I have never found it to be refused or rejected – although I’d have no difficulty were that to be the case. I am not today talking about individual blessing but I am talking about drawing together people of faith in the church to be people of faith in the world intentionally. It is a corporate, a communal blessing. In our regular worship, it finds its place in a section helpfully entitled: Going out as God’s people; not going home to have our lunch – that’s not quite enough - but going out as people of faith into the world of creation and recreation in the image and likeness of God.

Today is Trinity Sunday. On Trinity Sunday we worship God who is Three in One and One in Three. Many people throughout history have found it difficult to describe or to explain The Trinity. We are called in our baptism to live with and to live by The Trinity in faith, in hope and in love. We are to turn from evil and to turn to good. We are asked to dig deep into The Scriptures to see the work of The Trinity – and to dig deep into our lives and our experiences to disclose the same Trinity. St Patrick, from early childhood we have been told this, used the shamrock to describe to the Irish people what it might be like for three distinct entities to have a common root and a shared energy. He used an everyday weed to do this. It is an illustration. Using the everyday is good. At least the story has stood the test of time. The image and the colour of the shamrock are iconic of Irishness internationally. But this is not my point. Rather, I want to explore very briefly what The Blessing for Trinity Sunday tell us about God. God is my point.

Here it is:

God the Holy Trinity

make you strong in faith and love,

defend you on every side,

and guide you in truth and peace …

A lot of important things come to the fore when we prepare to leave our time of worship. A Blessing is an expression of confidence; we show the gritty capacity to ask God to do something – it is an interchange of voice. This is important to remember. The words that bind this blessing together are: faith and love, truth and peace. While we describe God in terms of strengthening, defending and guiding, we make the pledge to follow in the ways of faith and love, truth and peace. The actions of all of us come together with the strengthening, defending and guiding of God as we go out into the world of our shaping, the world of God’s creating. This is our blessing for today. Our best threefold response is: belief, loyalty and obedience: belief in the God who discloses God’s nature all the time, inviting response and belonging; loyalty to the church that in a very particular way is God’s gathering place and God’s instrument of goodness on earth; obedience to the cross of Christ that makes possible the continuing belief and the deepening loyalty to God the Trinity through the grace of repentance and the grace of forgiveness.

Genesis 1.1: *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind form God swept over the face of the waters.*