Sunday 22 May – Trinity Sunday

Scripture: Proverbs 8:22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

*Jesus said,*

*‘The Spirit will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine’.*

One big problem with the Trinity is that it is all but impossible for people to get their heads around. It would be interesting to know whether it has got harder as we have become more literate and numerate and tend to see things as puzzles to be solved rather than mysteries to be explored by never fully resolved. People who study science at its farthest reaches share the problem – and the delight. They too get to a certain point and find that things they thought they knew have to change to accommodate some new insight. For them, it just increases their sense of awe and wonder at the majesty of the universe. Rather than trying to reduce the Trinity to something we can explain, perhaps we need to relearn how to stand on the threshold of what we know and what we have yet to learn – and allow ourselves to be amazed.

* What insights into the Holy Trinity have you found helpful?
* When have you found yourself breathless with amazement at some natural phenomenon – content to stand before it without trying to explain it?

As a prayer exercise, look at photos of the cosmos – especially photos taken in recent years. Now think back 50 years to what people understood about the universe then… and then 100… 1000… and so on. You are seeing what they could not even have begun to imagine – even if they had some explanations for what they saw. Transfer that awe at a measurable universe to a moment of contemplation on the eternal and immeasurable Trinity that is our God.

*KT*

Monday 23 May – (Monday of Eighth Week in Ordinary Time)

Scripture: 1 Peter 1: 3-9; Psalm 110; Mark 10:17-27

*The rich young man said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.’ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’*

This is another of the gospels that make us wonder whether we have it in us to be disciples. What if the Lord asked me to give everything up – or even just my (/Facebook time/iPad/Friday treat/…)? God asks very few people to give up everything – and those who are asked have almost always been on a spiritual journey that has brought them to this point. What God is very good at, though, is identifying the things that get in the way of our relationship with him – looking at us with love – and pointing it out. As with the rich, young man – what we do then is up to us.

* When have you found yourself thinking that something is getting in the way of you living life to the full?
* What do you suspect God might be asking you to look at letting go of – or adding in – in order to have life in all its fullness?

Give thought today to your life – and what things might be getting in the way of your relationship with God. Be open and honest with the Lord. Let him look lovingly upon you as any thoughts emerge – particularly those that are so “right” they make your stomach squirm at the same time as making your heart say “that’s the one…”. Ask for the grace to respond to what emerges – knowing that you are loved and that God dos not ask anything beyond your strength (though it may be stretched!)

*KT*

Tuesday 24 May

Scripture: 1 Peter 1: 10-16; Ps 97; Mark 10:28-31

*Jesus said, ‘There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.'*

Some people are called to give up a lot in the service of God. Those of us who are not so called can wonder how on earth they can do it – and how they can seem happy about it – as so many do. It seems that, in the measure that they give things up they receive far more back but in ways that most of us miss. This does not make it easy. To leave your family and friends to go overseas and work in missionary or charitable work can be heart-rending. Not to have some of the luxuries – or even necessities –that others take for granted can be hard and leave you wondering if it really is necessary. But somewhere through it all is an inner conviction that the gains far outweigh any losses.

* Have you ever given something up – wondered about the wisdom of doing so – and then had a reassurance that it was the right thing to do?
* Who do you know – or heard about – who has made the choice to leave things behind or to forego things in ways that you could not contemplate?

Spend time today praying for those who make very significant sacrifices in their service of the Lord. You might also reflect on whether you are being invited to do something similar – not perhaps to the same extent but something that will have some cost to you. How will you respond?

*KT*

Wednesday 25 May (St Bede the Venerable)

Scripture: Ecclesiasticus 39: 6-10; Psalm 36; Matthew 5: 13-16

*Jesus said, ‘Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.’*

As the missionary Celtic saint, Boniface approached old age he wrote to Archbishop Egbert of York and Archbishop Huetbert of Wearmouth to send him and his community ‘a spark from that light of the Church which the Holy Spirit has kindled in your land’. He was referring to the works of St Bede which were seen as the height of scholarship in his day. Remember this was the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire and mass movements of people – and just before the start of the Viking invasions of England. It is wonderful to think that, in the midst of all this confusion and warfare, a man worked stolidly in the quiet of a monastery in our diocese but quickly became known around the known world as a great saint and scholar – even being mentioned centuries later in Dante’s *Paradiso*.

* What do you know about St Bede – and why his works stayed in print for centuries after his death?
* How is a love of learning linked to growing in faith and love of God?

St Bede saw learning as a privilege that helps humans to understand more and more about the majesty of God’s Creation. His learning extended far beyond scripture and theology to include history, geography and science. In honour of St Bede, learn something new today! Choose any topic that interests you and spend a little time learning more about it. Close with this prayer of St Bede:

*Good Jesus, as you have graciously allowed me here to drink in the sweetness of your word,*

*so at the last, I pray, you will bring me into your presence,*

*that I may listen to your voice which is the source of all wisdom,*

*and watch your face forever.*

*KT*

Thursday 26 May (St Philip Neri)

Scriptures: 1 Peter 2: 2-5, 9-12; Psalm 99; Mark 10:46-52

*When Bartimaeus, a blind man, heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stood still and said, ‘Call him here.’ … Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’*

Bartimaeus cannot see Jesus but must have heard of his reputation. He does not wait patiently for Jesus to notice him but rather demands his attention. This is not a disabled person who feels dependent or passive in his disability but someone who knows his need and identifies in Jesus someone who can help. Jesus respects him enough not to fuss – or suggest that he wait quietly until he comes over to him. Instead he stands still so that Bartimaeus can find him – and then, courteously, asks what it is that he would like him to do. This is mercy that does not see the recipient as someone to do good to – but as a brother who needs solidarity not just sympathy.

* What does Jesus’ attitude to Bartimaeus tell us about how we should be when we show mercy to others?
* What does Bartimaeus’ attitude towards Jesus tell us about approaching him in our own need?

This gospel is a good one to pray with your imagination. Set the scene and watch it unfold – noticing how Jesus, Bartimaeus and the other characters interact. Try to “hear” the conversations and the tones of voices – as well as facial expressions. You might like to draw the prayer towards a moment when, after healing Bartimaeus Jesus turns you and asks you the same question: “What would you like me to do for you?”

*KT*

Friday 27 May – St Augustine of Canterbury

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:2-8; Psalm 116; Luke 10: 1-9

*Jesus said to the seventy-two disciples, ‘Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house!” And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person.’*

Augustine was not a keen missionary. He was sent by Gregory to evangelise the British Isles but the reputation of the people in the islands made him fearful and reluctant to cross the Channel. Gregory insisted and, eventually, Augustine and his companions came to Kent and were welcomed by King Ethelbert. He was a pagan king but the witness and words of Augustine convinced him of the truth of the Christian message and he and his household became Christians. Augustine came into a country of small often war-like kingdoms and created an oasis of peace in Canterbury which continues to be an important centre of Christianity in England.

* Why do you think Augustine’s words and life-style influenced Ethelbert so much?
* How might you bring peace to the places you visit?

If you are visiting people today – or simply going into different places – consciously try to think of bringing the peace of Christ into the homes or other places you visit. Simply pause for a moment before knocking on the door – ringing the doorbell – or going into the room – and ask Jesus to bless you and those you are going to meet.

*KT*

Saturday 28 May

Scriptures: Jude 1: 17, 20-25; Psalm 62; Mark 11:27-33

*As Jesus was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said, ‘By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?’*

Although we might feel that the chief priests, scribes and elders were just out to trick Jesus, their question is a valid one. They see someone teaching in a way that seems to stretch their understanding of the Law almost to breaking point – who spends time with sinners – who heals people who (in their way of thinking) are sick because they have displeased God. They see a man who does not fit the mould and, understandably, need to determine whether he is of God or not.

* How do you decide who has the authority to guide you in your faith and spiritual growth?
* What is the danger in following someone who claims spiritual authority but who has not had appropriate formation or approval by others?

Think about those who have authority in the Church – and how they have received it either through ordination or formation and experience. Think also of those who claim it without sound foundations. Pray for the wisdom to discern the difference and the grace to embrace what is true and founded on secure teaching. If you are in a position of religious or spiritual authority, pray for the wisdom to fulfil the responsibilities this authority places upon you.

*KT*