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Trinitarian Faith and Care of the Earth

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Trinitarian Faith and Care of the Earth

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Trinity Sunday

May 26, 2013 Sunday Readings for Cycle C:

Prv 8:22-31; Ps 8; Rom 5:1-5; Jn 16:12-15

TRINITARIAN FAITH AND CARE OF THE EARTH

Lawrence E. Frizzell

Is the world made for humanity or do all creatures share equally the right to exist and to flourish undisturbed? The debate ranges widely, because politicians and economists need to grapple with the question just as much as philosophers and scientists. Does Christianity have a contribution to make? We can move the discussion beyond "anthropocentrism" versus "deep ecology" by offering a God-centered analysis of the question. Some claim that "man is the measure of all things," with the right to exploit the rest of reality for pleasure or profit. The danger of self-idolatry inherent to this pragmatic approach to the environment contains the seeds of destruction, both physical and spiritual. The Feast of the Blessed Trinity is a good occasion for asking whether we really place God first in our lives. Do we look for signs of God's power and presence in the world about us?

Celebrating the divine work of creation, the poets and sages of Israel reflected upon the wisdom which governs the omnipotence of God. No mere blueprint of the world, the divine attribute of wisdom was personified as the architect working alongside the Creator (Prv 8:30). Intimate with God and rejoicing in creation, wisdom delighted to be with human beings in order to guide them into the service of God, wherein true happiness and fulfillment is to be found.

The Fourth Gospel followed Jewish tradition and linked this theme of wisdom to the hymn of creation (Gn 1:1-2:4) which alludes to the Word and Spirit of God as agents of the divine will. John the Theologian had contemplated the teaching of Jesus and learned that the poetry of Israel's teachers pointed to a dynamic life within the mystery of the one God. Like others who knew Jesus in his risen life, John was guided to the fullness of truth by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church (see Jn 16:13).

St. Paul grounded the unique content of Christian faith in the work of God the Father "who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, Jesus who was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification" (Rom 4:24-25). The reconciliation of the world to God is accomplished through the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' death-and-resurrection. This provides the basis for hope in the gift of a richer life, a share in Christ's union with the Father in glory, promised "because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).

This summary of Trinitarian transformation of human life (Rom 5:1-5) is developed at length throughout chapter 8. The work of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit make Christians the children of God the Father and heirs of the destiny achieved by the risen Christ. But only if we integrate the pattern of the cross into the fabric of our lives (8:17)! Rather than a frantic search

to draw the maximum benefits from neighbor and nature, people should live with a definition of happiness that reveals a higher destiny, both for humanity and all creation. "The whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of God's children... because the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of God's children" (8:20-21).

The search for possessions, pleasure and power that motivates people's exploitation of the earth constitutes an acknowledgement of human emptiness. This very sense of poverty should be basis for faith that only God can satisfy the deepest yearnings of the human heart. Do we make a conscious effort to subordinate wealth and creature comforts to the understanding that they are only means to serve God? Does our way of life manifest sensitivity to our neighbor and future generations? Do politicians receive a strong message from Christian communities that local use of resources should be tempered by sensitivity to human needs on a global scale? We may consider that our Trinitarian faith is limited to the realm of prayer, yet the Gospel teaches that the Church should challenge the world at large. "I pray... that all may be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you; I pray that they may be one in us, *that the world may believe that you have sent me*" (Jn 17:21).