

Sunday Message from Fr William for the Twenty-Sixth Sunday of the Year 2023

*The 'Other World' continued*

Did you notice how, on your interstellar voyage, the bright pinprick of light you were heading for appeared to be, for the first few trillion miles, a single star on its own. Then as you drew nearer it became clear that it was in fact two, a binary star system, two stars orbiting around each other. This is like our journey through history. In Old Testament times God was seen as one and singular. There was no suggestion of multiplicity about God. You could be in big trouble even for suggesting otherwise.

We've journeyed a long way through history since then, and our perspective has a new clarity. Yes God is one, in the sense that a multi star system is one. But God is also three, just as a multi star system can be made up of two, or three, or more individual stars. Could it be that such wonders of the created universe, like for example a multi star system, are part of the design – images helping us grasp how God can be both one and three? Or could it be that the Trinity – Father, Son and Spirit – in their work of creation take delight in leaving reflections of their own trinitarian life throughout the created universe, even if most of these will never be seen by us?

Here's another thing about this change of perspective. From a distance the space travellers found it easy to see the oneness of the binary star system, harder to see there's more than one star. But once you've arrived, and travelled right into the middle of the star system, it's no longer so much the oneness of the star system that you're aware of. What you're overwhelmingly aware of is that there's two, or there's three, or however many stars in the system. This is how it is for us now with the Trinity. We've been brought right into the middle of their trinitarian life. Our overwhelming experience is of each in their individuality – Father, Son and Spirit – and our personal relationship with each, as described earlier in these reflections. By contrast the 'oneness' of the Trinity from this new perspective now seems a bit abstract

But in the 'other world' we're not just brought into the middle of their trinitarian life, floating somewhere between them. In the 'other world' we are integrated into their life. In the 'other world' we are joined to Christ, the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, and share in his life with the Father, that eternal life of infinite self-giving to the Father. The image of landing on a planet orbiting one of the stars of the multi star system, thereby becoming part of the multi star system, is the nearest we get to imaging this integration into the life of the Trinity, the eternal life of the 'other world'.

The limitations of the image are obvious. The image of living on the planet of a multi star system falls short of the 'organic' union between us and the Son in the 'other world'. And, of course, the image of two (or more) stars orbiting each other is the wrong dynamic. In the life of the Trinity the Son is going forth from the Father and returning to the Father. We need a linear, not an orbital image. And no sign of the Spirit in this image, that infinite bridge of love between Father and Son. Images like this may help give a glimpse of the 'other world'; but all images of the life of the Trinity are inevitably inadequate. *to be continued*

*William*

1 October 2023