In our liturgical calendar today is Trinity Sunday. Let me at the outset explain why Trinity Sunday following Pentecost, from a theological point of view, isn’t a good one. It is easier, I suppose, for us to take the linear chronological approach to designate today as Trinity Sunday, a week after Pentecost. Once the Spirit has been given to us, we are then guided by Him to discern and naturally the first move is to discern and declare our belief in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Such linear approach, from Father to Son, and then to the Spirit, however isn’t the proper way to think of the dynamic of the Trinity.

In fact the Spirit is acknowledged in the NT before Pentecost, and in a distinctively Trinitarian context. At the baptism of Jesus by the river Jordan, St. Mark tells us, as Jesus *“came up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him; and there was a voice from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the beloved; in you I am well pleased’”* (Mk.1.10f). Here the three Persons of the Trinity are revealed in the relation that is proper to them: the Father, declaring his good pleasure in his Son; the Son, the object of his good pleasure; and between them the Spirit, proceeding from the Father as a witness that the Father loves and owns the Son. Basil the great, this Cappadocian Father, understands the Trinity in terms of relationship. In his great book on the Holy Spirit, he interprets the place of the Spirit in the Trinity in terms of the Father’s anointing of the Son: the Son as the anointed one, the Father the one who anoints, and the Spirit the anointing. St. Basil understands Trinity is God’s self-revelation. We are to understand not only the Son’s relation to the Father and the Father’s to the Son, but the relation of each to the Spirit.

Secular folks often caricature the Christian idea of Trinity as a piece of irrelevant theory. Even some Christians tend to think that too. They question why the early Christians should make things overly complex. Well, let us put these questions to those who criticize the doctrine of Trinity. How would you explain 'God is with us'? How would you explain the reality of God's presence in our midst? What does God look like? The doctrine of Trinity is not a philosophical question. On the contrary, it is a powerful and relevant reality. The Early Christians come up with the Trinity idea in order to help them in time of need, to bind them together in love, and to send them out on their mission. In short, the early Christians made a discovery, and I hope we also find the same, that they could not say all they meant by the word 'God' until they had said Father, Son, Spirit.

If there weren't a Trinitarian formula in the NT, somehow we'd have to supply one to make sense of what we believe. For example, what does it mean to say that Jesus is truly the Emmanuel? What does it mean for Jesus to say, "I am with you to the close of the age?" At the beginning of the gospel of Matthew, God is revealed in the birth of Jesus and He is called, 'Emmanuel'. And at the end of the same book, when Jesus utters his last words on earth, *'Lo, I am with you till the close of the age',* can we not draw an implicit conclusion that Jesus is indeed God. In our Christian journey on earth, we are bound to encounter difficulties and hardship, such as in this pandemic time, the most comfortable words we have are Jesus' saying, *'Lo, I am with you till the close of the age.'* This is exactly what the Psalmist would say, *'If God is on our side, what can mortal do to me?'* But who is this God? The Early Christians confidently reply,' He is Jesus Christ.'

How does the Trinitarian God bind the believers together? Let us see how it works out in Paul's thought. We all know the Grace: *'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.'* We say it at the beginning of our service and usually at the conclusion of meeting. But do we really understand what it means? The Grace is the last verse of 2 Corinthians. This is the letter Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in which he tells the Christians there how he wrestles with the grace of Jesus as the motive for his work (e.g. 8.9), learns to live by the love of God in good times and bad, (e.g.1.3-7), and celebrates the Spirit through whom he and his diverse, often difficult, congregations learn to see Christ in one another (e.g. 3.1-18). At the end of the letter, it all comes down to very practical and basic matters, as 13.11 makes clear. Paul writes: sort things out, pay attention to what you are told, agree together, live in peace. *'The God of love and peace will be with you'*; the Emmanuel promise again. But now it is guaranteed by the God-with-us person, Jesus, and renewed in daily reality by the God-with-us Spirit. That is what the Grace means whenever we say it.

Our understanding of the Trinity sends us out to mission. In BCP, the Old Testament reading for today is the famous passage in Isaiah 6. It tells the prophet Isaiah saw the glory of the LORD in the Temple and then was commissioned. *'And I heard the voice of the LORD saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."'* Now let us turn to Matthew 28.16-20, the great commission of Jesus Christ. Can you not see the connection? Now it is Jesus who commissioned his followers to go and make disciples of all nations, *‘baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'* From the very beginning, God has revealed Himself as a missionary God. First, he sent Abraham to Canaan, that through him and his descendants, the sin of the world might be forgiven. Then he sent His only Son to the world to carry out what Abraham and his descendants failed to achieve. In Jesus, both the Jews and the Gentiles receive the healing love and forgiveness. Now, under Jesus' authority, God sends Jesus' followers out with that same healing love and forgiveness, of which baptism is the sign and seal.

The most misused and misunderstood religious word is 'God'. The Dalai Lama believes in God, so does Donald Trump. Many Israelis and Palestinians believe in God. Likewise, many western folks also believe in God although they do not go to church. Do they all really believe in the same God? I doubt it very much.

We Christians, however, believe in the Trinitarian God. It is not easy to believe and indeed worship this true God in the midst of so many false claims. It is like keeping on course on a bush walk through thick mist and a swirling wind. We need to check the compass continually if we are to keep our bearings. How do we do this, and what do we find when we do?

The check on the compass is always Jesus himself. No Christians can ever claim that he knows the gospels through and through. There is always more to discover, more that will challenge our comfortable assumptions and our cozy semi-idolatries. We are always liable to be blown off course, but a close and continuous study of, and meditation upon, Jesus will provide the stabilizing factor we need. And we can only do this if we are prepared to go on finding out more about Jesus himself, in his actual context. It is in the light of Jesus that we go on rediscovering who the Creator of the universe really is; it is in the light of Jesus that we go on rediscovering who the Spirit is, and distinguishing his Spirit from the other spirits that present themselves to us from time to time. And especially at this time, we do confront so many spirits of the new age movement as well as new Atheism.

Our message to the world is quite simple. You have choice. You either embrace this God, this God who is both three and one, or you embrace idols. The first way is the way to life, to the restoration of the true humanness. The second way is the way to ruin, to the ultimate destruction and dehumanization. Our belief in Trinity takes us seriously to the difference between good and evil, between the true God and the false gods.

Why did St. Patrick wear a breastplate to evangelize Ireland? It is because St. Patrick took Paul's commendation to put on the Christian armour, but it is also because he knew that he had to confront age-old paganism with the news of the God of love revealed in the cross. May we, like St. Patrick, wear our breastplate (which has the strong name of the Trinity) to confront the world which is full of false idols. Let us boldly proclaim the gospel, in the power of the Spirit, that the crucified and risen Jesus is Lord.