

## SPIRITUALITY

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Rev 1:8

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;  
to God who is, who was, and who is to come.

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Matt 28:16-20; L165B

The eleven disciples went to Galilee,  
to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them.

When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.

Then Jesus approached and said to them,

“All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

### Reflecting on the Gospel

Ronald Rolheiser has written: “The most pernicious heresies that block us from properly knowing God are not those of formal dogma, but those of a culture of individualism that invite us to believe that we are self-sufficient, that we can have community and family on our own terms, and that we can have God without dealing with each other. But God is community—and only in opening

our lives in gracious hospitality will we ever understand that” (“Finding God in Community,” *Canadian Western Times*). And so we need this solemnity that reminds us that God is a Trinity, a flow of relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and ourselves. The Lectionary readings chosen for today, therefore, are about relationships of love.

Today’s gospel gives us the concluding words of Matthew. The risen and authoritative Jesus meets with the Eleven, wounded by betrayal and failure, still a very human mix of hopeful faith and hesitant doubt, of adoration and indecision. For our consolation, these are the disciples to whom Jesus entrusts the inclusive mission of making disciples of “all nations,” without distinction of race or culture. With the authority of the risen Jesus, they are commissioned to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” and to teach these new followers to obey everything that Jesus has revealed to them during his



earthly mission. On their first missionary journey (Matt 10:1, 5-8) there had been no command to teach, but now that they have experienced not only Jesus’s life but also his death and resurrection, they are equipped to teach the full significance of his instructions. We who have gathered to celebrate the Most Holy Trinity have been baptized and taught, called and schooled by Jesus through the mission of his church. We have been drawn into the divine-human communion of that first “trinitarian” moment of Jesus’s baptism by John in the Jordan when the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were named. Matthew gives us the solemn assurance that Jesus, Immanuel, “God-with-us” (cf. Matt 1:23) as the personal promise of God, will be with the church until the end of human history. His is no “absentee lordship” but a presence of a servant Christ who wishes to liberate rather than dominate. His church, therefore, must also be a humble servant that remembers that its authority is not absolute but is derived from Jesus; a church that identifies with those who are a very human mix of faith and doubt; a church that avoids all triumphalism and insensitivity to the wounded people of our world.

And as we are the church, are *we* this kind of people? When we sign ourselves “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” could we sometimes reflect on this rather than making a very perfunctory “brush and babble” gesture? Can we instead have something of the passion of John Donne’s “Holy Sonnet XIV,” where Donne expresses his faith that, to be truly free, we must be rescued from sin and then taken captive again—but this time by the

love of the “three-person’d God”: “Batter my heart, three-person’d God; for you / As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend; / That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend / Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.”

### **Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

**To the point:** Jesus speaks to the disciples shortly before ascending into heaven. From this moment on, their interaction with him will be **different**. And yet, while Jesus is bodily removed from their presence, his Spirit remains with them, sustaining them, inspiring them, and leading them. Two thousand years later, we bear witness to the continued fulfillment of Jesus’s promise. He is “with us always” as we take up his command to bring the good news of his love to the ends of the earth.

### **Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses addresses the people on the eve of their entrance into the land of Israel following forty years in the desert. After recounting the history they have lived since their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, Moses exhorts them to “fix in [their] heart[s]” their fundamental belief as a people “that the Lord is God / in the heavens above and on earth below, / and that there is no other.” Their adherence to monotheism set the Jewish people apart from the inhabitants of neighboring lands who worshipped many gods. In the gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that they are to initiate people into new life in Christ with the trinitarian formula: “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Although the one God has been revealed to us Christians as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, we continue to affirm that this triune God is one. The theologian Elizabeth Johnson writes in her book *Quest for the Living God*, “It is all the one God, but we use a triple mode of address to signal the threefold way God has self-communicated in history.”

**to experience:** In your own life of faith and of prayer, how do you most often call upon and experience the Lord who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

### **Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** Today’s psalm proclaims “of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full.” As Christians, we experience the fullness of God through the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. We understand God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be a relationship of love that overflows to animate all of creation. Through this love we have been chosen to be God’s own and to care for and steward the abundance of creation. In the first reading, our thriving is linked to keeping the “statutes and commandments” of God, for in this way, Moses tells the people, “[Y]ou and your children after you may prosper, / and [you will] have long life on the land / which the Lord, your God, is giving you forever.”

**to psalmist preparation:** How do you make care and enjoyment of creation part of your spiritual life?

### **PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

In the first reading from Deuteronomy, Moses urges the people to “fix in [their] hearts” the knowledge of the one God. How do you keep God in the center of your life?

The psalmist proclaims, “[O]f the kindness of the Lord the earth is full.” How do you experience God’s “kindness” in creation?

St. Paul writes to the Romans, “[Y]ou did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, / but you received a Spirit of adoption.” How has fear impacted your spiritual life?

Jesus commissions the disciples, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” How does your parish community join in this work of “making disciples”?