

W E E K L Y M E D I T A T I O N

The great feast of Pentecost, which we celebrated last Sunday, is one of the greatest feasts in the church year. This feast is also called the feast of the Holy Trinity. With the descent of the Holy Spirit (called the Comforter, Advocate or Helper – from the Greek word “paraclete”) the mystery of who God is – is answered. God is the Father (He is the classic “God” of Biblical history), but God is also “the Son”, revealed in Jesus Christ, and God is also the Holy Spirit who descended on the fledgling Church in the form of tongues of fire.

It was the first two Ecumenical (Universal) Councils of the Church, the councils of Nicea in 325 AD and Constantinople in 381AD that defended the understanding of God as Trinity. God is three persons, yet one God. God is one in essence (or substance), consubstantial and undivided, yet existing eternally in three persons. The Three in One and One in Three!

It was also these first two councils that gave us our Creed, which is Trinitarian both in its structure and in what it says. The first part of the Creed begins with “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty...” The second and largest section deals with the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who became a man and suffered, died, and rose again for us and for our salvation. And the third and last section of the Creed begins: “And in the Holy Spirit”....

To be Orthodox means to worship God the Holy Trinity. It is at the very heart of our faith, a very active part of all our prayer and worship. How often we say things like: “Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.” And almost every prayer ends with a Trinitarian doxology, as for example at the end of the Lord’s Prayer, “for Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...” Again and again we mention the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To us as Orthodox, this is our God!

When I was a Protestant Christian, I believed in the Holy Trinity (as do almost all Christians). But it was a theological doctrine in the books, which had little reality in my life. As Protestants we almost never invoked the Holy Trinity or all three persons. Prayers were usually to “God” or “Lord” or “Jesus” but the Trinitarian aspect was sorely lacking. For me the Holy Trinity has come alive in the Orthodox Church. This is one of the priceless treasures preserved by the Orthodox Church. As a matter of fact, one of the first uses of the title “Orthodox” was that it was used by those who were defending the understanding of God as Trinity.

Fr. Stacey