

Reflection on the Gospel-Trinity Sunday Year B
(Matt 28:16-20)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Trinity Sunday celebrates the core Christian conviction that God is a communion of relational love. For the people of Israel, no other god could compare with their God whom they knew as both creator and liberator and whom they experienced as intimately involved in every aspect of their history and of their day-to-day lives. In a world of many gods, the assertion found in today's first reading from Deuteronomy that there is "no other god" was an enormous claim to make. God's sustaining and liberating presence brought with it serious responsibilities: keeping God's commandments grounded the people of Israel and their descendants in the life of their God.

The earliest Christians inherited the Jewish belief in one God. At the same time, Christians expressed their faith in distinctively Trinitarian language. Over the first six centuries of the Christian era, the belief that God is a communion of love was to develop into the doctrine of the Trinity, a teaching that is at the heart of Christian faith. The word Trinity is not used in the Christian Scriptures. In fact, it was not until the Council of Constantinople in 381CE that the doctrine of the Trinity was set out in the creed, and not until the Second Council of Constantinople in 551CE that the word "Trinity" was actually used of the Triune God.

Today's gospel reading brings Matthew's gospel to a close. Jesus commands his disciples to make disciples of all peoples and to baptize in the name of the Trinity. At the beginning of this gospel, Jesus is named Emmanuel, "God with us". With Jesus' final assurance, "know that I am with you always", we find ourselves gathered into the very life of God. *Perichoresis*, a Greek term suggestive of a cyclical movement or of figures interweaving, is one of the earliest and probably one of the most striking images used to explain the Trinity. The life that is in God is understood, in this image, as a totally harmonious movement of equals. The wonder is that we are gathered into this movement. As St. Paul reminds us, God is not a distant God, but rather a God whose Spirit draws us, as "joint heirs with Christ", into God's own life of love and relationship. Trinity Sunday is the day we set aside to celebrate the nearness of God who invites us into the dynamic cycle of life and love, a cycle that reaches out beyond the human community and embraces the entire cosmos. As we make the sign of the cross, we might become more and more attentive to the wonder of the divine life that dwells in us and in whom we are privileged to dwell.