

The Chaplain writes...about *Thy Kingdom Come* and our Feast of Title this year.

Thy Kingdom Come is a prayer initiative which came initially from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York back in 2016. The purpose was initially to encourage Christians throughout the world to pray during the days between Ascension and Pentecost for the coming of God's Kingdom – something, of course, for which we pray every day in the Our Father.

Since my teens, I have always been aware of the traditional Novena of prayer from Ascension to Pentecost for the coming of the Holy Spirit. And have kept those days in prayer. So I was delighted to hear that this practice was being officially supported and encouraged by the Archbishops.

The movement has grown since 2016, and last year many thousands around the world joined it. This year an attempt is being made to further extend this and to encourage people to pray that their families and friends may find faith.

This is all well and good – and much to be encouraged. But I do have some concerns. The first of which is that such 'storming of heaven' by getting millions around the world to pray for a *particular outcome*, has to be considered very carefully indeed. If we think, for example, that we shall somehow succeed in 'changing God's mind' by sheer force of numbers, we are seriously deluded, and worse than that we are very close to embracing magic, rather than God. Of course the Archbishops are not saying this for a single moment, but there is an undercurrent in *some* of the literature in support of *Thy Kingdom Come* which could easily be mistaken for such a view.

We have to ask ourselves just what we are about in praying for other people, in that prayer that we describe as intercession. Essentially, it is about entering into Christ's own intercessory prayer as our great High Priest who has passed into heaven, that is to say, is now seated at the Father's right hand in glory. Christ's offering of himself is now an eternal act. We join with him when we pray – we pray 'in Christ', and 'through Christ' to the Father.

And yes of course we pray for others, including those whom we know who find faith difficult or impossible. I do not deny for a moment that wonderful things sometimes happen as a result of such praying. Though the change that prayer effects *first and foremost* is not a change in God, nor in those for whom we pray, but in *ourselves*. And that is a wonderful answer to prayer!

So to pray that others may find faith is a good thing. If, *first and foremost*, that prayer may make us people who speak louder of Good News through the kind of people that we are, the love we offer, the warmth of our hospitality and our compassion towards those differing from us.

And I believe that can and does happen. And that is a wonderful answer to prayer.

And yes, sometimes despite ourselves, our prayers for others are answered in other ways, too. Unexpectedly, inexplicably, yet truly. In such cases, the proper response from us is thanksgiving. And the realisation that if we are praying in, with and through Christ, sharing in his intercession, then in some way – a way that we don't have to be able to explain – things happen between God and the person for whom we pray through the mediation of Christ our Lord, who is present both to us and to the person we remember in prayer.

At the end of the day, when we pray we open ourselves more to God, with, in and through Christ our Lord. And that prayer is mysteriously something which is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Which brings us back to those days between Ascension and the day of Pentecost, when above all we celebrate the gift of the Spirit who creates the Body of Christ – in Mary, in the Apostles, in us now.

So it will be good to join – as originally was encouraged – in these days of prayer for God's Kingdom to come in our own particular way. During the days between Ascension and Pentecost this year, there will be a celebration of the Eucharist *every day* in Holy Trinity Church as we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit who brings us close to the Risen and Ascended Christ, whose Body the Spirit forms

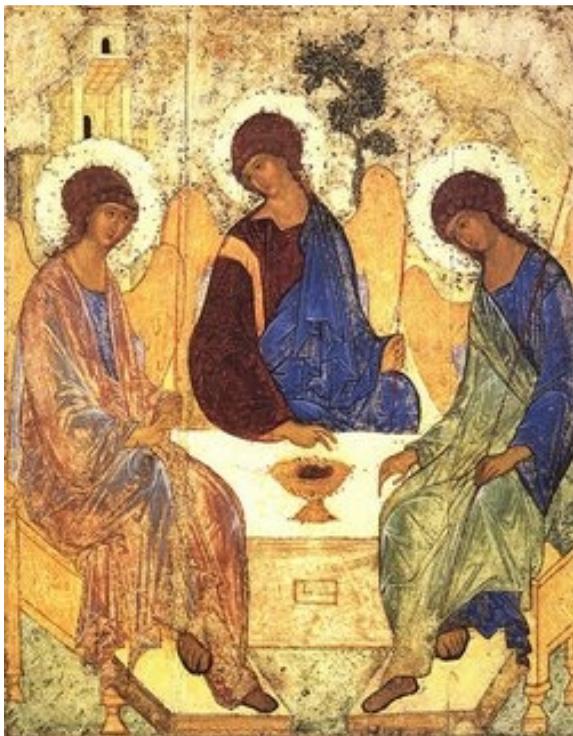
within us and through us. To pray in these days for this gift, to pray that we may be more open to this gift, will indeed bring rich fruit to our human living. And, one way or another, open eyes of faith everywhere.

Details of the daily Eucharists in this time will be made known through the weekly bulletin nearer the time.

Then, at the end of May this year, on Sunday 27th May, comes our Feast of Title, Trinity Sunday. As things turn out, I am delighted that our celebrations will be helped this year by a number of happy coincidences. First, the preacher at the 10h30 Family Eucharist will be the Archdeacon of Switzerland, the Venerable Adèle Kelham. And then, after the Eucharist, which will have some special and international input from some of our young people, there will be a celebratory buffet lunch with an international feel. More on this later, but please ensure that you note the date and come along for this important moment in our year.

Someone recently reminded me of a remark I made at the end of my annual report for the Annual Congregational Meeting this year. It seems an appropriate thought to conclude this piece for the month of May in which Trinity Sunday falls.

Here in the centre of Geneva, our Church is dedicated in honour of God the Holy Trinity. The doctrine of God's being Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), focusses many different insights about what we believe of God, and as a consequence, what we



believe about ourselves, about true human living in that *image of God* in which we are created. To consider two of these insights perhaps as particularly significant for us. We believe that the doctrine of the Trinity speaks of a dance of joyous love in the very being of God. And we believe it further expresses the creative hospitality at the heart of God, which is ever welcoming new people into the Father's embrace, held in the Son by the power of the Spirit. At our best moments, the life of our community here is not afraid to express this dance of joyous love, nor the welcome to all of the Father in all that we are and do in this place in our wondrous diversity. I invite you to contemplate Rublev's famous icon of the hospitality of Abraham in which many have seen a reflection of the Holy Trinity whose dedication we bear in this city, and which we particularly shall be celebrating on Sunday 27th May.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alec Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal tail on the final letter.