

## Hello and Goodbye

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Lord of all power and might,  
the author and giver of all good things:  
graft in our hearts the love of your name,  
increase in us true religion,  
nourish us with all goodness,  
and of your mercy keep us in the same.

Today our theme may be found in a line from the collect for Trinity 7:

‘graft in our hearts the love of your name’

Do you remember when you were young what it was like to be in love? There is a whole industry out there about adolescent love not least the rather dubious ‘Twilight’ books and the films that have been spawned from them but unless you are a girl aged between 16 and 25, it is unlikely that you will have first-hand experience of this particular series. Adolescent love, like the Courtly Love of Mediaeval Romance, is often unrequited, a longing only in the mind of the beholder, where even the name of the boy or girl you love has resonance for you for instance Juliet exclaiming to the not so empty night: ‘Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?’ And it is the love of God, in particular the love of his name, that is the focus of today’s sermon.

In today's sermon, the last in a series which has been looking at our service of Holy Communion, I want to consider the opening and closing of the service. I want to look at four things you and Sybil and I say: two at the start and two at the end of the service.

The first thing I say which begins the service proper are the words, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' That is the intention of our worship: that all we do, we do in the name of the God we worship. The God we worship is Trinitarian: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the peculiar insight of Christianity into the nature of God. He is one God and three persons and that is what we believe and that is who we worship declaring that fact right from the start.

The second thing I say is a versicle and response. A versicle and response is simply the technical term for me saying one thing you replying another. Versicles and responses pop up throughout the service for example when I move to the altar to consecrate the bread and the wine. But here the versicle and response is a greeting: 'The Lord be with you' and your response 'And with thy spirit'. Nice balance in which I greet you with the wish that the Lord, a euphemism in Hebrew ('Adonai') for God, be with you. Of course how could he not be? God is everywhere; he is our constant companion. But the greeting is a reminder that we should be aware that God is in fact present with us. And your reply is to wish that the same be true for me. This versicle and response contains the truth of the relationship between priest and his congregation: that your priest prays for you and you pray for him.

At the end of the service, there is the blessing then after the final hymn, the dismissal. The blessing can take many forms but I usually use the one I know off-by-heart. Interestingly, it has more resonance if it's said from the heart rather than simply read from a book. I say, 'The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and those you love now and always.' Strong words. They embody the hope that as a whole person, in what we think and feel, we will be centred because we know the love of God in the person of his Son. And more: that we are blessed by our faith in the Trinity but not only us but also those we love too. Blessings are important. A blessing is to make holy the mundane, the ordinary everyday things of life by a blessing are dedicated to God. By doing so, we are opening our eyes to recognise much of what we have to thank God for in our lives. We should all bless all we do and it is the peculiar role of a priest to offer priestly blessings.

Finally, Sybil says the diaconal words of dismissal: 'Go in peace to love and to serve the Lord' and you reply 'In the name Christ, amen.' The words embody the Catholic name for Holy Communion – the Mass. Derived from the Latin 'missa' the word means sent out, sent forth. It contains an essential and vital truth: that life is going on outside the church and that we need to rejoin the flow. But in doing so, we are not alone. We have been refreshed by the presence of Christ in our service and we take the presence of Christ with us; we are at peace and therefore are enabled to be a light in a darkened world.

My final sermon in the series on understanding our service of Holy Communion has considered the opening and closing of our service. They are the same: a reminder that God is with us, transforming our lives. May our attendance at Holy Communion be an encounter with God through meeting him in hearing and listening to his word and through experiencing his presence with us in the bread and the wine of the Eucharist.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's Dinard*

*22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2010*

H: Sermon 22: Hello and goodbye

