

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 not just one, but also three-in-one. 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, even if references to all three persons of the Trinity are rarely found in the one passage. Over the first six centuries of the Christian era, the belief that God is three-in-one was to develop into the doctrine of the Trinity which is at the heart of Christian faith. The word Trinity is not used in the Christian Scriptures. In fact, it was not until the end of the fourth century, at the Council of Constantinople in 381, that the doctrine of the Trinity was set out in the creed that is still professed today. The Second Council of Constantinople in 551 used the expression "trinity" to refer to the one essence of God to be worshipped in three persons.

Today's gospel passage 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 Triune God. 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 dancing 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 three and yet one in a totally harmonious dance of equals. The wonder is that we are invited to join the dance. Trinity Sunday is the day we set aside to celebrate the nearness of the God who draws us into the dance of life and love. As St. Paul reminds us, God is not a distant God, but rather a God whose Spirit draws us, as "God's children" and as "joint heirs with Christ", into the very communion of the Trinity.