



**Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue  
in the City of New York**

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**[www.SaintThomasChurch.org](http://www.SaintThomasChurch.org)**

**Sunday, June 6, 2004**  
*Trinity Sunday*

*Festal Eucharist*  
*at 11am*

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A Sermon by  
The Reverend Park McD. Bodie

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*A SERMON FOR TRINITY SUNDAY*

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...

In both the reading from Isaiah and the reading from the Revelation to John, that book Robin Griffith-Jones calls “the Unveiling”, we are ushered into the heavenly court and the adoration of the One seated on the throne. In both revelations, the scene we encounter is one of dramatic dynamism. This is not a static scene. It is a vision of creative order, full of activity, color and sound. It is quite unlike anything we were taught in Sunday school. The heavenly court embodies that pacific unity we call God the Holy Trinity who is uniquely creative and redemptive.

A succinct description of the Trinity is that the Father and the Son gaze at one another without rivalry and in such loving harmony that the love between them is what we call the Holy Spirit. This description reveals the dynamic reality of him we call God in his very being. And it is the love transpiring within the very life of God that creates, redeems, and sanctifies all being. This is what Jesus means when he says to his friends, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak.” Jesus, let us remember, never claims to speak on his own authority, but repeatedly insists that his proclamation of the kingdom is what the Father bids. Over and over he says, “The Father and I are one.” His proclamation of the present and coming kingdom, like his promise of the Spirit of truth is not static, but dynamic. Jesus, his teaching, his miracles, his death, resurrection and ascension all belong to that dynamic creativity which is always and will always constitute the life of the One who is the Source of everything, of that being we clumsily refer to as God.

I want us all to think about what Jesus means when he says we will be guided into all the truth, in light of the constant dynamic creativity that takes place in the life of God. By constant, I am referring to what we mean when we sing or say, “As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end,” or “for ever and ever.” I want us to do this because we run the risk of unfaithfulness when, for our own comfort, we trivialize, or refuse to consider the reality presented to us by the unending nature of the dynamic creativity of the love at the heart of the life of God. In other words we turn to idols of our own making dressed up in the language and imagery of the Bible and the Christian tradition because we cannot bear the unveiling of love, the Holy Spirit, and the truth of that love into which we are ever being called because it means that we, ourselves, cannot be static, but are required by the Spirit to live lives of dynamic, creative love.

As many of you know, I have been studying and pondering religious fundamentalism for a while now. It is a very attractive phenomenon for us all in one way or another precisely because it insists that all the truth has been revealed in some halcyon past, and the believer need only subscribe to it, adopt a set of behaviors, set phrases, and then within those strictures do whatever pleases one.

As I pointed out in another sermon recently, this invariably involves disfiguring or turning on its head the tradition so one can guard the truth that has been revealed once for all.

While it would be easy to enumerate the instances of fundamentalism in other faith traditions, it would serve no purpose here, because we are here as Christians to be lead by the Spirit into all the truth. So let us look at the static reality depicted by fundamentalism in our own faith tradition. Despite the repeated admonition in the New Testament to love those who hate us, to turn the other cheek, to care for the widows, the hungry, prisoners and to understand that in Christ there is no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female we have a sordid history of doing just the opposite in order to protect pure doctrine, all of which is well documented. In our own lifetimes the shameful things said by Christian leaders about people of color, about Jews, about the role and place of women, about gay people, about the poor are beyond cataloguing. The suggestions for how to deal with these people who threaten the purity of the tradition are equally shameful and completely outside the tradition of the apostolic Church which was continually opening itself to people they could never have imagined including. Sadly these truly 'untraditional' teachings about the unworthiness or impurity of some people continue to this day in some disfigured forms of Christianity.

Jesus has promised that in his return to the Father, the ruler of this world (that is fear, violence and death) is judged, and on the cross found guilty and sentenced to death. He says to the disciples "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." With the putting to death of death and his minions, fear and violence by the Lamb of God, the dynamic life of God has been shared with the world in the Church by the power of that love we refer to as the Holy Spirit. Since that love is a creative and growing force, and not a corpus of teachings delivered once for all, the Church is being led into a constant unfolding of the truth of God's love. This is a source of continual surprise, a continuing revelation or unveiling of the truth about God and ourselves which brings redemption and salvation, the purchasing of our soul's health by The One who sits upon the Throne and the Lamb as John the Seer would say.

There has never been a time in the history of the Church when the Spirit was not leading us into all the truth, and there has never been a time when we did not resist it because we tend still to believe in the vanquished gods of fear, violence, and death. William Temple, the mid-Twentieth Century Archbishop of Canterbury is alleged to have said something like, "A Church that is not willing to die is not much of a Church." I take that to mean that as the Body of Christ, the Church must be ready to be like him even unto death, trusting, but not knowing just how, God will raise up a new creation out of the dynamic love that is his very life. This leaves no room for fundamentalism, with its reliance on fear, violence and death. This means that we who celebrate the mystery of the life of the Holy Trinity must understand that we do not yet know all the truth, the depth of God's love, and that we must accept that the Holy Spirit, that love that exists between and binding together the Father and the Son will indeed ever be guiding us into all the truth. This looks like the cross. It also looks like the resurrection.