



Trinity Sunday 2006.

Deut 4: 32-34, 39-40; Romans 8: 14-17; Matthew 28: 16-20

Our reading from Deuteronomy today is a lament. God, ever-faithful charges the people with idolatry. God calls heaven and earth to witness against the people. (read from verse 26-40)

One of the issues that provokes God is the fact that the infidelity is coming from senior people; people who should know better because of the life-time of experience that they have had of the graciousness, mercy and fidelity of God.

The storyteller reminds the people of the great revelation to Moses in the vision of the burning bush. This revelation became the defining story for the people in their understanding of their identity.

Often the second reading is difficult to relate to the theme of the Gospel and the reading from the Jewish scriptures but today this reading from Romans is quite critical. In the time of Paul the number of Christians in Rome was rising and this letter probably written from Corinth. Its main theme seems to be the relations between Judaism and the youthful Christianity. The fact that it necessitated a letter indicates that problems had arisen around the theological differences between the two faiths. In the text we have today Paul uses the metaphor of adoption to describe the relationship of the new community to the old. Paul is not suggesting that the Christians are adopted members of the old community but rather that God's "tent" is wide enough to include new understandings of the concept "children of God". His use of the phrase "spirit of adoption" helps to clarify this. Christianity is not like a child made a legal entity within the boundaries of a family but something completely new.

Made one in Christ Christians are called into a new relationship with Trinity.

The Gospel of Matthew presents what is often called *The Great Commission*. Like the Ascension story of Luke the locus is the mountain and so in symbol we are taken back to the Moses story and the great revelation. Jesus appears among them and we are told that some paid homage to the risen Christ while others had doubts. This sentence underlines the difficulty the early community had in coming to terms with the radically new concept of a new Presence of Jesus. Jesus approaches and in the language of Daniel 7:14 claims the role of Son of Man and the authority that goes with the title. With this authority he commissions his disciples to continue the work of leading others to discipleship. The field of endeavour is named as *the Gentiles*.

The phrase *Make disciples* has presented some difficulties over time. We know that the concept of membership of a group has been a dominant interpretation of *make disciples* but if we reflect on our community we will see that membership does not automatically confer the commitment and dedication to the realization of the

Kingdom that are the requirements of discipleship. This is why the call of Vatican II was to return to our roots and to become educated as Christians.

Through Baptism we are called to be active participants in the mission of God after the pattern of Jesus and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The group called “disciples” will of necessity be small as not all will respond to the call to be Christ-present-in-the-world. Once it was thought that religious carried out the discipleship role while ordinary people got on with life as best they could. Now we know from the Gospels that the call to discipleship is offered to all but not all will accept. This does not mean that those who cannot accept discipleship as a way of life are “less than”. Sometimes people have come to discipleship later in life and there is a certain natural rhythm to this. If we remember that the Gospels are the training manuals for disciples we get a feel for what we are called to. The heart of our call is to help everyone recognise that the love, mercy and forgiveness of God is available to all without cost.

Patricia Stevenson rsj.