

As we sing on this day the glorious words of worship for the Trinity of our faith: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in One and One in three, it is perhaps timely to look at the state of our Christian faith and the threats which endanger all of us faithful at this time.

But first, it is important that we review the history of our faith, the foundations on which Judaism is built and the Mosaic covenant: which was replaced for Christians by the second covenant brought by Jesus Christ. The reason for this is that if you read the old testament, you will find phrases like this: 'And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.' (Leviticus 24.16) and 'Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.' (Deuteronomy 12.2-3)

The New Covenant of Jesus Christ revised this earlier guidance by destroying the enemy by love: which He has shown for us by the direct intervention of His Son Jesus Christ amongst us: an intervention designed to resolve those petty human differences which had developed, mediated by the Prince of the earth so that a toxic situation had developed and had to be resolved so that the expression of God's love for man could develop and encourage all 'to love thy neighbour as thyself'.

But as Our Father sought to relieve us from harm, there was an opportunity to continue the old covenant, with all its faults and misinterpretations of God's will, but in an alternative format. This opportunity was a development of the success of the work of the Apostles and Evangelists as, inspired by the Holy Spirit on that very first Pentecost, they saw the influence of the church spread despite the persecutions which sprang up quite often. It was this success – the work of the Holy Spirit - which generated an opposition. Opposition was developed by those who regretted the 'old ways', the 'tried and true ways of old': they were looking for a way of life based on the law: but a new law, which they could believe divinely inspired, a law which would, in their opinion, improve on the Mosaic law.

Today, that 'new direction' has engendered its own extreme interpretations and we find that Islamic state (IS) is our enemy: it is a threat to our way of life. IS roots are an aberration of the Wahhabi Sunni Moslem practice, which is the guiding light of the Ibn Saud regime governing Saudi Arabia. Iran is a Shiite Moslem nation: Iran is fighting IS together with Russia, the Kurds, Syria (the regime of Assad), the USA and NATO, including Canada. Perhaps for this, IS operatives from within Iran have just attacked Iran: Iran blames IS, the US and Saudi Arabia.

There are two parts to this struggle, designed to damage humanity. The first is the obvious one, that this threat of danger as we go about our daily work is harmful to all: it adds stress which is not good. The attacks by individuals and small groups also inculcate adverse sentiments about the overall faith of the perpetrator: do you remember the hard work done in Northern Ireland so that IRA violence was not laid at the gate of the Vatican? One of the

most dangerous words in the language is 'hate': if you can generate enough people to hate, just what can you achieve: look at Rwanda, look at South Sudan!

Second part: The opposite to hate is of course, love: and it is the love of the neighbour that we as Christian faithful are called to express. No this is not just any old love, nor is it just the romantic expression of the film industry: it is these for sure, but it is also parental love and guidance, it is brotherly love: the concept of family and the necessity of family for our wholeness of heart, and of course, that purely unselfish love when you take on the needs of others at a time that their need is great. It is this love of Jesus Christ for all of us that we seek in our frail and poor way to replicate, so that we too can live the words of St. Paul when he writes,

'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

[2] And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. [3] And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

[4] Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

[5] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

[6] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

[7] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

[8] Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

[9] For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

[10] But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

[11] When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

[12] For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

[13] And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

(1.Cor.13) DRM+