

Readings: *Proverbs 8: 22 – 31; Psalm 8; Romans 5: 1 – 5; John 16: 12 – 15.*

Most students of Scripture know that the Bible does not contain a fully developed doctrine of the Holy Trinity. But that does not mean that the foundations of that doctrine cannot to be found in the Old and New Testaments. Over many years the Church has drawn from ideas and images in different parts of scripture until the doctrine found in the Creeds, the liturgy and the Church's other teachings emerged. So, as we try to understand the doctrine of the Trinity, there are many Bible passages which are worth our study – and one of them is today's First Reading.

This passage from the Book of Proverbs is one of several which speaks of Wisdom, not as an abstract idea, but as a feminine figure who plays a vital role in the creation of the world. She is eternal – created by God before the material universe came into being. She has been *by his side, a master craftsman, continually delighting him and delighting to be with the sons of men.*

This image of Wisdom has contributed to the thought of the Church about the Holy Spirit – the Breath of God. The Book of Genesis (1: 2) says *the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters of chaos*, and in the Psalms (32/33: 6) we sing *By his word the heavens were made, by the breath of his mouth all the stars.* So the Spirit of God is seen at work in creation.

Other verses of the Book of Proverbs develop the idea of Wisdom *delighting to be with* human beings. At the beginning of chapter 8, from which today's reading comes, the figure of Wisdom is described as a woman: *Does not Wisdom call, does not understanding raise her voice? ... Beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud... "O simple ones, learn prudence: O foolish men pay attention. Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right; for my mouth will utter truth".* Here Wisdom is seen at work in the everyday lives of men and women, encouraging them to follow what is *noble* and *right*. Here is another aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit – within the life of each person.

It is ideas like these which have prompted teachers in the Church to recognise that God is not a unit, an impersonal theory, but a unity, a personal communion, intimately involved in the lives of men and women and in the universe in which we live. And from this recognition has developed our faith in God as Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to whom we offer our worship today.