

Trinity Sunday (ABC)

'Mother, today we learned all about the Blessed Trinity' little Martha cried, rushing in from school. 'What did you learn', asked her Mum. 'Well' she said 'there's the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost' – she then paused dramatically – 'and AMEN isn't anybody.'

Well 'Amen' to that. The OT tells us that at the foot of Mount Sinai the Israelites fashioned a golden calf, called it God and then worshipped it while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments from the true God at the top of the mountain. Now, the first of these commandments is: 'I am the Lord your God, you shall not have strange gods before me'. So, in obedience to the Lord, the irate Moses smashed the Golden Calf to smithereens.

Are there any Golden calves in our society which we need to smash? Life and death issues come to mind. During the war when the over packed train-loads of ill-fated people arrived at Auschwitz it was decided who would live or die. It's not uncommon these day for medical personnel to ask a mums-to-be if they want to keep their baby especially if it has a medical condition – even a small one. That sounds like telling God to 'move over' to me.

Often people put the blame on God or religion fuelling all wars. Isn't it the breaking of God's First commandment what causes wars, not God. Most wars are actually triggered by autocrats who have set themselves up in place of God. Even natural disasters are often caused by humans. Soil erosion, for instance, as a consequence of deforestation, often results in fatal landslides – one of which took place in Papua New Guinea recently where many died. The first commandment demands we be stewards of God's creation not abusers.

But there are caricatures of God in circulation as well. One such is what I've heard called the 'cuddly bear God'. This is a sugar-coated God who is falling over Himself to smooth out all the ruffles of life. This parody of God keeps us shielded from every pain. And yet, how many people have found the true God only in their pain? How many people have turned from false Gods only in the midst of a crisis? Jesus asks us to take up our crosses every day and follow him, not use religion as an escape hatch from facing life's problems. In the musical 'the Sound of Music' the nun in charge told the aspirant nun Julie Andrews that the convent wasn't for people who want to run away from life's challenges. Kark Marx, the father of communism, saw religion as 'the opium of the

people'. There may have been a grain of truth in that. Jesus never wanted to be cast in the mould of a 'superman', a quick fixer of everything which goes wrong. In today's second reading we'll only share the glory of Christ if we've already shared in his sufferings. So I think the 'cuddly bear God' needs 'to go.

The Book of Genesis says that God made man in 'his own image and likeness'. Some aim to refashion God into their own image. We don't play God, or dilute his commands for our own advantage. Best let God be God and us humans to recognise our creaturely dependence on Him.