

To Deum  
PHIL. 0.750  
1"

"We praise you, O God: we acclaim you as the Lord" - from the hymn, "Te Deum laudamus". Good morning to you: and welcome to join this programme now, which is a short "line-out" for reflection, prayer, praise to God. And my topic this morning - continuing the theme I've been on for these past few weeks, the Trinity of God. Last Monday I introduced and read for you from a letter of a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Christian thinker, theologian and teacher, St Athanasius. Today, another piece of what you might call Christian classical writing, for your reflection, thought and prayer. This time it's not so well known an author: and about 200 years closer to our own time. No: that's still some 1400 yrs ago. I said "not so well known": but that, I suppose, depends a bit where you come from (if you're not local) or on how familiar you might be with the variety of Catholic religious sisters who work in Hong Kong. For the man I'm referring to is a fellow-countryman of mine who, because he himself worked overseas from Ireland, has given his name to two groups of Irish missionaries - the Columban Sisters and the Columba Fathers. Among the writings of Columbanus, there's an "Instruction" on Christian faith, and it's from this I want to quote for you today. (He also wrote poetry, by the way, and a boating-song that became famous). Columbanus founded a number of monasteries in what's now France and northern Italy, exporting Irish monastic traditions, which didn't always fit in too well with the local practices. ... but that's another story: here he is, on the secret depths of God: "God is everywhere". Columbanus wrote, "utterly vast, and everywhere near at hand, according to his own witness of himself; I am, he says, a God at hand and

not a God afar off. The God we are seeking is not one who dwells far away from us; we have him within us, if we are worthy. For he resides in us like soul in body, if only we are sound members of him, if we are not dead in sins, if we are uninfected by the taint of a corrupt will: then truly does he reside in us who said 'And I will live in them and move among them'. Yet if we are worthy that He should be in us, then in truth we are quickened by Him as His living members: for in Him, as the Apostle says, we live and move and have our being. Who, I say, shall explore his highest summit to the measure of His unutterable and inconceivable Being? Who shall examine the secret depths of God? Who shall dare to treat of the eternal source of the universe? Who shall boast of knowing the infinite God, who fills all and surrounds all, who enters into all and passes beyond all, who occupies all, who escapes all? Whom no man has ever seen as he is? Therefore let no man venture to seek out the unsearchable things of God, the nature, mode, and cause of his existence. These are unspeakable, undiscoverable, unsearchable: only believe in simplicity and yet with firmness, that God is and shall be even as He has been, since God is immutable. Who, then, is God? He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God. Seek no further concerning God; for those who wish to know the great deep must first review the natural world. For knowledge of the Trinity is properly likened to the depths of the sea, according to that saying of the Sage: 'And the great deep, who shall fathom it?' Since, just as the depth of the sea is invisible to human sight, even so the Godhead of the Trinity is found to be unknowable

by human senses. And thus if, I say, a man wishes to know what he ought to believe, let him not think that he understands better by speech than by believing: because when he seeks it, knowledge of the godhead will recede farther than it was. Therefore, seek the supreme wisdom not by verbal debate but by the perfection of a good life, not with the tongue but with the faith which issues from singleness of heart, not with that which is gathered from the guests of a learned irreligion. If then you seek the unutterable by discussion, he will fly farther from you than he was. If you seek by faith, wisdom shall stand in her accustomed station at the gate, and where she dwells she shall at least in part be seen. But then is she also truly in some measure attained, when the invisible is believed in a manner that passes understanding: for God must be believed invisible as he is, though He be partly seen by the pure heart."

— from an instruction <sup>on</sup> faith, by the 6<sup>th</sup> century St. Columbanus. Now Ps 104

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↳ Greek chant from the Russian Liturgy

MUSIC

PRAYERS [CXBK 18/14/26/24]

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,

world without end. Amen.