



Trinity Sunday: 30th May

Take some time to be still, perhaps light a candle and offer your own prayer to God. You may find the following words helpful.

Father God, we come to you this morning knowing that you are with us. We know you are watching over us and filling our hearts with your Holy Spirit. Help us to understand more of you, to grow in your likeness and to make a fresh start with you today and every day.

Amen

Hymn 286: Holy, holy, holy

Collect for Purity

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: the first commandment is this: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength'. The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen, Lord have mercy

Welcome

The Lord be with you,

and also with you

Prayer of Confession:

What God has prepared for those who love him, he has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything. Therefore, let us in penitence and faith open our hearts to the Lord, who has prepared good things for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2. 9,10

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **Amen**

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Collect for this morning:

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity: keep us steadfast in this faith, that we may evermore be defended from all adversities; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Amen.

Old Testament Reading: *Isaiah 6: 1 - 8*

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.'

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!'

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'

Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God'?

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends

Hymn 167: Father, we love you

Gospel Reading: *John 3: 1 - 17*

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Sermon: Revd Petra Shakeshaft

Some years ago, after a frustrating morning grappling with The Trinity for the sermon on Sunday, I escaped for a walk along the Roman road to clear my head. It was one of those beautiful May days bright with sunshine, hedgerows white with hawthorn and cow-parsley bobbing on the breeze; horse-chestnuts decorated with their candlesticks – late Spring flowers everywhere. The air was filled with birdsong, insects buzzed around and the gentlest of breezes swept through the trees. A yellow brimstone butterfly appeared in front of me, fluttering. Then another joined in and they danced around each other and then a third joined them and together the three fluttered and danced up and down, circling around each other, so close their wings might have touched. It was one of 'those' moments.

I had gone out to make space in my head for the complexities of the Holy Trinity and in one God-given moment, at least it certainly felt God-given, all the complexities were somehow pared away as I watched these three fragile creatures dance around each other. And just for a moment, I understood. In the sheer delight and beauty of the moment, I recalled that one of the words used to describe the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity; is *perichoresis*, which, through an accident of etymology, is often translated as 'dancing around.'

For the last one thousand, six hundred- and ninety-six-years Christians have recited the Nicene Creed at every Communion service. I'm glad we say it regularly, because, believe me, it took a lot of bloodshed to reach agreement. One of the earliest and most fundamental issues was the attempt to describe the nature of the Son and the Spirit. This centered around the ideas identified by two similar Greek words. Homo – i - ousios meaning of a similar substance – Sort of, *like* something, but not the same, whereas homo – ousios, without the 'i' in the middle, means the same as, the same substance. The historian, Edward Gibbon, pointed out that early Christianity was nearly rent asunder by the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet!

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one substance, Co-equal and co-eternal.

We can't define the Trinity. There are illustrations, which can be helpful, but not entirely.

The three leafed clover, ice, water and steam, And many of our imperfect attempts to unravel the mechanics tend to verge on heresy. I always thought ... I am one person, but I am a woman, a mother and a wife, one person, three roles, was a helpful way of thinking until I went to theological college and discovered it is a heresy called Modalism. We can say all sorts of things about the Godhead that seem helpful, but our real understanding of God comes from our experience of revelation – how God makes himself known to us.

The Spirit of God hovers over the waters of creation. The Word speaks creation into being on the breath of the Father – And the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us; Jesus, prophesied Messiah, Emmanuel. Jesus, the Word, who shares The Father's creativity and our humanity; on whom the Holy Spirit rests as a dove Jesus, who speaks to Nicodemus of the Spirit that comes from where it comes and goes where it goes, the Spirit of truth, who guides into all truth, promised and revealed, given at Pentecost, and through whom the church became and becomes church.

The word Trinity may not occur in the Bible, but the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit does, and it is the relationship, that 'dancing around,' which is of vital importance.

The complexities of doctrine and theology are important, but even so, when speaking of God, we must speak and think in metaphor, it is, as Richard Rohr says, the only language available to us. Metaphor helps us to structure our experiences of the world and of God.

So all those metaphors like the three leafed clover; like my butterflies on my walk don't give us the models of the Trinity that systematic theology does, but they are helpful because this is how our human minds work in trying to make sense of things that fall beyond our imagination.

The three persons of the Trinity give us a model of *being*, because we are relational creatures. We exist in relation to others. We are created for community. Our identity as individuals is utterly dependent on relationships with others. We can only know what it means to be human by means of interrelationship. The German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann says, ‘Without social relation, there can be no personality.’ So as the three persons – or personalities of the Trinity give us a model of being individuals, they also gives us a model for being community, but a community where individuality is not subsumed into the community, where individuals remain individual - I am still I and you are still you and we are we.

And relationship within community is dynamic, always new – because each moment of a relationship *is* new, each encounter is new. We bring new experiences, new feelings never felt before, we are constantly being remade, new-created in and through relationship.

‘We live and move and have our being not in ourselves but in one another’ – and in God.

The three persons of the Trinity are ‘distinct centres of love, will, knowledge and purposeful action’ held in a sublime and eternal relationship that surpasses our human love, will, knowledge or action.

John of the Cross speaks of the soul only being able to comprehend The Trinity through participation and communication, that is relationship. Through this we are transformed into the likeness of the One in whose image we are created. Sometimes trying to unravel complicated truths can leave us with more questions than we started with – and that’s not necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes these things begin to unravel themselves in unexpected moments of grace, through scripture, through prayer, through music or poetry or encounter. sometimes through the fragile perichoresis of three unwitting, dancing butterflies on the Spring air. Each little unravelling is a momentary gift we don’t always get chance to hold onto, but is nevertheless a precious, transforming encounter with the divine

Affirming our Faith: The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers

Let us pray...

The Peace:

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

The peace of the Lord be always with you

And also with you.

Hymn 37: Angel-voices ever singing

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.
 Now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn 658: There is a Redeemer

Remembering the Lord's Supper:

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal- with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends- we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look

forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 97: Christ is made the sure foundation

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Go in the peace of Christ, Alleluia, alleluia!

Thanks be to God, Alleluia, alleluia.

