

# A SERVICE FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

*7<sup>th</sup> June 2020*

## **The Gathering**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*All* Amen.

## **The Greeting**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

*All* and also with you.

## Welcome and Introduction

### **Prayer of Preparation**

*All* 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.

### **Prayers of Penitence**

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.

*All* Amen. Lord, have mercy.

*Invitation to Confession*

God the Father forgives us in Christ and heals us by the Holy Spirit.  
Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,  
all slander and malice, and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

*All* **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you  
in newness of life to the glory of your name.  
Amen.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins,  
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

**The Collect**

*for Trinity Sunday:*

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 for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

**The First Reading:** 2 Corinthians 13:11-end (*Paul bids farewell to the church in Corinth*)

<sup>11</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

<sup>13</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

This is the word of the Lord.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm 8** (*a Psalm of Divine Majesty and Human Dignity*)

O LORD, our Sovereign,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,  
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;

<sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?

<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made them a little lower than God,  
and crowned them with glory and honour.

<sup>6</sup> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet,

<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,

<sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup> O LORD, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*All* **Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

## Gospel Reading

### *Gospel Acclamation*

Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,  
one God, who was, and who is, and who is to come,  
the Almighty.

### *All Alleluia.*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

### *All Glory to you, O Lord.*

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

### *All Praise to you, O Christ.*

## Sermon

Trinity Sunday is an important marker in the church calendar, since it marks the end of the great whirlwind of springtime – Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Rogation days, Ascension and Pentecost – and the beginning of the long season of Ordinary Time which stretches before us for a solid six months before we come around to Advent again. In itself, though, Trinity Sunday is when we reflect on the nature of God’s existence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit: three persons existing as one God, a concept which is virtually unique to Christianity. We remind ourselves of this every time we say one of the Creeds as well as many other times in our services together.

However, the Trinity represents a peculiar challenge for a preacher, so much so that there is something of a running joke in the church that the vicar – or ‘boss’, if you like – will always try to make sure the curate – the ‘junior partner’, perhaps – ends up preaching on Trinity Sunday. Why? Because the Trinity is such a tricky concept that the chances of explaining it clearly and accurately without getting something wrong is more or less zero. In theological terms, of course, getting something wrong isn’t just a mistake, it’s heresy, which always sounds much more serious. So, making the curate preach on Trinity Sunday is a test of sorts – can s/he get through it without inadvertently preaching a heresy? A bit mean, perhaps, but I suppose it can be regarded as a sink-or-swim test.

In that context, you might find it odd, then, to know that I volunteered to preach today. Is this because I think I’ve cracked the holy mystery of the Trinity and I can explain it clearly and accurately in under ten minutes? Sadly, no: after two thousand years of failed

attempts and schisms on the matter, that would be foolishly arrogant in the extreme. Nonetheless, I did think it might be worth explaining why it can be so tricky and what solutions there might be.

The first thing I find striking about the doctrine of the Trinity is that it has survived countless other changes that have happened over many centuries in the Christian world more or less unscathed. Whatever differences of belief might exist between Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Calvinists, Evangelicals, Lutherans (and many more), the doctrine of the Trinity is one core belief we all have in common. This is even more striking when you consider that the word Trinity does not appear anywhere in the Bible, which you might have noticed in our readings today. This means there are a few Christian denominations that don't accept the idea of the Trinity, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, but they are by no means the majority.

So, what exactly is the doctrine of the Trinity? What are we claiming when we recite our Creeds? What are we really saying when we say things like 'We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit', or when we describe Jesus as 'being of one substance with the Father'? As I suggested earlier, it's probably easier to give some examples of how easy it can be to say something that sounds reasonable but which is actually heresy.

- If you were to say, for example, that there is one God and Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the names for three different ways that we experience that one God, that's heresy. It's even got a name: Modalism and was condemned in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.
- How about 'there is one God but God is made up of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit combined together'? No, also heresy: Partialism.
- What about describing the relationship as that the Son and Holy Spirit are creations of the Father? No: that's Arianism, condemned in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

This minefield of difficulties means that people are often tempted to use analogies instead – a classic ploy of the nervous curate when preaching – but these can also be problematic. Instead of me giving you more examples, here's a suggestion of the problem which I found fairly amusing, taken from a YouTube video. It's a supposed conversation between St Patrick and two Irishmen keen to know more about the Trinity:

[You can find the whole video here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQLfgaUoQCw&t=11s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQLfgaUoQCw&t=11s)]

So, you might be thinking, it's quite easy to criticise and point out all the potential misunderstandings there might be about the Trinity, but what can we usefully say?

The solution I'm going to suggest to you is by no means simple – as you might have guessed by now! – but it is hiding in plain sight, early on in the Book of Common Prayer<sup>1</sup>, and it is probably the clearest statement of what faith in a Trinitarian God

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<sup>1</sup> If you want to find it, it's usually found just after the order for Evening Prayer (Evensong).

means. It's called the Athanasian Creed and it's the third major Creed of Christianity (the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds being the two better-known ones you're probably used to). Now, reciting an authorised Creed after the sermon is compulsory in Church of England communion services, so I thought I would use The Athanasian Creed now, firstly to fulfil that requirement but secondly to form a conclusion to this sermon. That way, you get an answer to the questions I've posed and, at the same time, we satisfy the liturgical requirements of the Church. The Athanasian Creed is almost never used today<sup>2</sup>, almost certainly because it's rather dense and wordy but let us now say it together, not only as a corporate expression of our faith, but also an answer to the problems I've just described.

### **The Athanasian Creed<sup>3</sup>**

**WHOSOEVER would be saved :**

**needeth before all things to hold fast the Catholick Faith.**

**Which Faith except we keep whole and undefiled :**

**without doubt we will perish eternally.**

**Now the Catholick Faith is this :**

**that we worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity;**

**Neither confusing the Persons : nor dividing the substance.**

**For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son :**

**another of the Holy Spirit;**

**But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one :**

**the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.**

**Such as the Father is, such is the Son : and such is the Holy Spirit.**

**The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated : the Holy Spirit uncreated;**

**The Father infinite, the Son infinite : the Holy Spirit infinite;**

**The Father eternal, the Son eternal : the Holy Spirit eternal.**

**And yet there are not three eternals : but one eternal**

**As also there are not three uncreated, nor three infinities :**

**but one infinite, and one uncreated.**

**So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty : the Holy Spirit almighty;**

**And yet there are not three almighties : but one almighty.**

**So the Father is God, the Son God : the Holy Spirit God;**

**And yet there are not three Gods : but one God.**

**So the Father is Lord, the Son Lord : the Holy Spirit Lord;**

**And yet there are not three Lords : but one Lord.**

**For like as we are compelled by the Christian truth :**

**to confess each Person by himself to be both God and Lord;**

**So are we forbidden by the Catholick religion :**

**to speak of three Gods or three Lords.**

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<sup>2</sup> Despite this, the Book of Common Prayer stipulates that the Athanasian Creed must be said by 'the Minister and people' in services on no fewer than 13 occasions in the year!

<sup>3</sup> This version is taken from the 1928 Prayer Book rather than the 1662 version

The Father is made of none : nor created, nor begotten.  
The Son is of the Father alone : not made, nor created, but begotten.  
The Holy Spirit is of the Father and the Son :  
not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.  
There is therefore one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons :  
one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.  
And in this Trinity there is no before or after : no greater or less;  
But all three Persons are co-eternal together : and co-equal.  
So that in all ways, as is aforesaid :  
both the Trinity is to be worshipped in Unity, and the Unity in Trinity.  
Anyone therefore that would be saved let them thus think of the Trinity.

**FURTHERMORE** it is necessary to eternal salvation :  
that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Now the right faith is that we believe and confess :  
that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man.  
He is God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds :  
and he is man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world;  
Perfect God : perfect man, of reasoning soul and human flesh subsisting;  
Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead :  
less than the Father as touching his humanity.  
Who although he be God and man : yet he is not two, but is one Christ ;  
One however, not by conversion of Godhead into flesh :  
but by taking manhood into God;  
One altogether : not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.  
For as reasoning soul and flesh is one man : so God and man is one Christ;  
Who suffered for our salvation : descended into hell, rose again from the dead;  
Ascended into heaven, sat down at the right hand of the Father :  
from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.  
At whose coming all people must rise again with their bodies : and shall give  
account for their own deeds.

**THIS** is the Catholick Faith :  
which except we do faithfully and steadfastly believe, we cannot be saved.

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.

## Prayers of Intercession

*A prayer for Trinity Sunday:*

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
and live and reign in the perfect unity of love:  
hold us firm in this faith,  
that we may know you in all your ways  
and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory,  
who are three Persons yet one God,  
now and for ever.

Lord, in your mercy

*All* **hear our prayer.**

*A prayer for us all:*

As our country and our world continues to struggle against coronavirus,  
we pray for those who are ill or suffering,  
those who care for them,  
those who are afraid or vulnerable,  
and all those who provide us with essential services of any kind:

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy

*All* **hear our prayer.**

## Year's Mind

07/06/2008	Judith Chamberlain
07/06/2013	Gareth Davies
10/06/2015	David Jessett

## Sick

Jonathan Petty, Mick Maton, Patricia Edward Jones, Pat Coldrick, David Stevenson,  
Mary Edward Jones, George Royle

## Prayer Cycle

In the Devizes Deanery Wave of Prayer: Devizes St John and St Mary, Devizes St Peter's, Southbroom St James

### **Within Churches Together, Devizes:**

Championing Social Justice. Those who struggle to make ends meet. Agencies such as Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund and Traidcraft

Merciful Father,

*All* **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### **The Dismissal**

*Blessing*

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,  
defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among us and remain with us always.

*All* **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*All* **In the name of Christ. Amen.**