

Parish of Central Exeter

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion

Trinity Sunday 7 June 2020



This stone sarcophagus (only part of which is shown here) dates from the early fourth century and provides the first known representation of the Trinity. The three similar bearded images on the left are the triune God, who is seen here creating Eve from the rib of Adam. Adam and Eve appear again flanking an un-bearded Jesus (as God) who is assigning farming to Adam (a square basket for holding the wheat he will grow) and spinning to Eve (a sheep). The serpent coils around the tree at the right. This artefact is currently in the Vatican.

We begin this act of worship today with a well known hymn invoking the Trinity: St Patrick's Breastplate: 'I bind unto myself this day the strong name of the Trinity.'

Sung for us here at Down Cathedral, Downpatrick, Ireland. The words appear on the screen.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH4ToVxtn9A>

Call to worship

The words God speaks
are the life and sustenance
of all that exists.

The life Jesus gives
is the re-creation and renewed birth
of all that is broken and worn.

The Spirit's stirring in our souls
is the inspiration
for creativity, compassion, joy, and community.

Life-giving, life-restoring, life-fulfilling God;
may our whole lives be worship.
In all things, may we seek to connect with
and to reflect your love and your hope.

~ posted on The Minor Keys. <http://theminorkeys.blogspot.ca/>

Opening prayer

Father,
You sent your Word to bring us truth
and your Spirit to make us holy.
Through them we come to know the mystery of your life.
Help us to worship you, one God in three persons,
You reveal yourself in the depths of our being,
by proclaiming and living our faith in you.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen

We seek forgiveness

Holy and triune God,
You alone live in perfect relationship,
One God in three persons,
Mutual and loving,
Ever seeking reconciliation and unity.

You have called us to live in your completion, yet
We confess that our relationships are imperfect and
We are incomplete without you.
We are selfish and greedy.
We are anxious and resenting.
We feel the shame of our foolish behaviour and brokenness.
We have allowed sin to drive us apart from one another
And from you.

Forgive us and restore us,
Draw us close and bind us together in your mercy.
May we long for wholeness and peace,
May we strive toward gratitude and grace
In the saving name of your son, Jesus Christ,
By the working power of your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

(written by Katherine Lee Baker, and posted on the Reformed Church in America website. <https://www.rca.org/>)

Assurance of forgiveness

“Remember, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”
Christ is with us, now and always.
The Holy Spirit is in our midst, now and always.
God the Creator is creating something new, now and always.
We are always loved, always forgiven, always known to God and cannot be forgotten.
Know this, and share the Good News. Amen.

Alternative collect for Trinity Sunday

Holy God,
faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Angel Voices

Words by Frances Pott, music by Arthur Sullivan. This much-loved Victorian hymn reflects both the reading from Psalm 8 and the celebration of the Trinity. Words appear on the screen. Filmed as part of the BBC's Songs of Praise. Someone might recognise the unnamed cathedral.

Access: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6OccgHzmCg>

Reading

Psalm 8

¹ Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory in the heavens.

² Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

3 When I consider your heavens, the work
of your fingers, the moon and the
stars, which you have set in place,

4 what is mankind that you are mindful of
them, human beings that you care for
them?

5 You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honour.

6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:

7 all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,

8 the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

9 Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!



You can now hear this Psalm sung in Hebrew. The words appear in both Hebrew and English. This is produced by Randall Buth of Living Biblical Hebrew. There may be an advert at the beginning – click to stop it when you see skip ad appear bottom right.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZTx1vlpksc>

Reflection and commentary for Trinity Sunday from Revd Chris Bryan.

Let us consider two statements I might make about things that I know, or at least think I know.

I know that the Cote Brasserie is in the Cathedral Yard, facing the Cathedral.
I know my friends Jean and Paul.

But of course I don't mean quite the same thing by the word "know" in those two sentences, do I? The whereabouts of the Cote Brasserie is a fact that I can understand more or less completely, appropriate, grasp, and use. I can't "know" my friends Jean and Paul in that way. They are, after all, human beings. And I can't understand any human being completely. I can't even understand myself. Indeed – never mind human beings! – I can't even understand my friend's dog or the cat down the road. There is always something about Paul and Jean, about you, about me, even about a dog or a cat or any other sentient

being that will elude me. There is a mystery, a depth I cannot plumb. There is always something about us all that can surprise me.

That said, it remains that that I do know *something* about Jean and Paul. I know their *names*, for they've told me them.

And I know *things* about them, true things, because they are things we've done together, parts of life shared.

Now all that is somewhat how Israel came to know God. And what we call the Old Testament—that is, the holy scriptures of Israel—is a record of that. I am giving you an analogy, of course, a metaphor, as all human language about God is analogy or metaphor. But as those who study psychology are increasingly reminding us, virtually all human language that's important is metaphorical. Metaphors are how we think.

So – how did Israel come to “know” God? Not, certainly as a fact to be grasped, fully understood, or analysed! As we've just said, we can't even get to know a human being or an animal like that. So how foolish to imagine one might know God in that way! As the Psalmist said,

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
so high that I cannot attain it. (139:5).

But still Israel knew and knows *some* things about God. She knows God's name, for God has told it to her, as a sign of God's covenant and friendship with her – the Tetragrammaton—a gift so holy and precious that she will not even dare to say it, and Christians with occasional foolish exceptions have generally followed her wisdom in that respect.

And she knows things that God has done: she knows what she celebrates every Passover – that God delivered her from bondage, from the land of Egypt. Her God is a God who sets her free.

In time she came to know at least two other very important things.

First, that the God who could free her from Pharaoh was the Lord of all things and through Divine Wisdom had created all things by actions that were pure love and joy. So the teacher of Proverbs hears the Divine Wisdom herself declare that in that very act of creation she was beside God and

was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race. (8:30-31)

And second, and later—Israel was still wrestling with this idea even in the days of our Lord—she came to know that the God who could set her free from Pharaoh's bondage, the God who was Creator of Heaven and Earth, could also raise the dead – and would.

All this, Israel knows.

So then to ourselves. What do we Christians know about God, and how do we know it? First, we know that our God is the *same* God, the God of Israel: the God Whose “majesty is praised above the heavens” (Ps. 8:2). This is one reason why, every time we approach the Lord’s table in the Eucharist, we join in the song that Israel’s prophet heard the angels singing in the Temple at Jerusalem in the eighth century before Christ, saying “Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3). Jesus himself knew no other God, and if we claim that we *do* know and follow some other God than Israel’s God, then we are no followers of Jesus.

But life goes on: our friends *are* still the same friends we’ve had and known for years. But even so they may show us new sides of themselves, we do new things together, and so, quite often, we also find ourselves learning new names for them – names that will speak of the life they have shared with us. When I name Jean and Paul as not merely “Jean and Paul” but as “my friends”, or even “my old friends” that, of course, is exactly what I am doing. So it is with our relationship as Christians with God. Our God is still the God of Israel. But life has gone on, and God has done new things in our life. God has done two things in particular, and the New Testament tells of them.

First, that “when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children” (Gal. 4:4-5). As a result of that gift, even though we did God’s son to death on a cross, still God raised Him from the dead so that, justified by God’s faithfulness, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand” (Rom. 5:1-2).

And *second*, God has poured forth upon us and into us the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth” (John 16:13), so that through that same Spirit we may be born again, born from above. It is by doing these two things—by, if you will excuse the phrase, *coming on* to us in this way—that God has shown us a new Name by which to call upon God. According to Matthew, the risen and exalted Jesus himself announced this Name to the church. What was more, he associated it indelibly with the church’s very being, since it is the Name that we must invoke whenever we pronounce someone “Christian” and baptise them into the church. You are to do it, says our Risen and Exalted Lord, “in the Name of (that is, ‘with regard to ‘and’ in dedication to’) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). God is *Father*, for Jesus in the gospel calls him “Father,” using the intimate Aramaic word “Abba” as of a trusting child to a known and trusted parent--and invites us to do the same—as we shall do every time we make so bold as to call upon God in the words of Jesus’ own prayer, daring to say as he did, “Our Father.”

God is *Son*, as Jesus himself declares in the gospel: he is the one who alone may truly say, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father” (Matt. 11:27/Luke 10:22) and “all that the Father has is mine” (John 16:15). And as evangelist and apostle both show us, he is the One Who, with the Father, is the source of grace and truth, and properly receives that worship which is God’s alone (cf. Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:3, Rev. 5:13).

And God is *Spirit*, the enabling God of Pentecost, who comes to us and breathes into us and, when we can bear it, “will guide us into all truth” (John 16: 12, 13) – *us!*—that strange, rather comical little group of oddly assorted, highly flawed men and women who are yet in God’s eyes precious, rooted in time and eternity, the church, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, terrible as an army with banners.

And yet through all this and in all this we are quite clear, as the evangelists and the apostles are quite clear, that it is always still the *ONE* God Who is at work, the One God Who was Abraham’s friend, the One Who talked with Moses, the God of Israel. *That* is the God whose love “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5).

And indeed, somewhat as my calling Paul and Jean “my old friends” speaks of our life together, of their history with me and mine with them, so our calling the God of Israel “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” speaks of *God’s* history with us as Christians, identifying our God as the God of the Old Testament story *and* the God of the gospel story *and* the God of Pentecost. And that we baptise in this name makes it clear that this is the God of Whom we speak by our whole being as a church, and in fellowship with Whom we continue to live and move and have our being.

Perhaps we can’t entirely grasp this? Perhaps we don’t entirely understand it? Of course we can’t and of course we don’t! Didn’t we begin by saying we can’t comprehend fully our friends, or even our pets? So how on earth should we expect to comprehend God? Because the point is, for friendship, even friendship with God, we don’t *need* comprehension; we need *love*¹—as St Paul pointed out: “though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and do not have love, I am as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal!” (1 Cor. 13.1). You don’t fulfil a relationship by *analysing* it, but by *living* it. In other words, what the Lord our God requires of us ordinary Christians—“mere Christians,” as C. S. Lewis would have said—is just the same as it’s always been: to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). And that walking with God requires that we attempt the same three things that have always been required.

The first requirement is confession or affirmation: we must tell the story—as we shall do in a nutshell every time we declare our commitment to the Triune faith in the words of the Creeds, which are *not* the biblical narrative but *imply* the biblical narrative and are indeed quite meaningless without it,

The second requirement is communion: such as we normally seek by coming to the Lord’s table and being fed by Him with His Own Hand or else, at times when we are unable physically to do that, by offering ourselves to him and endeavouring to make a spiritual communion in our hearts.²

¹ Of course I am perfectly prepared to concede that love may be a *way* to true comprehension, but that is another matter.

² Spiritual Communion is the Christian practice of *desiring union with Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist*, especially useful to those who for some reason cannot receive Holy Communion. It is a practice that has been especially used by Christians in times of persecution (such as the era of state

And the third requirement is adoration: which we may always offer, and should offer now, ascribing, as is most justly due, to the One True God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all honour, might, majesty, dominion and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

You might like to join in with the congregation of St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth, Scotland to sing 'Ye watchers and ye holy ones.' Words appear on screen after a lengthy organ introit.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYMv_Z-iJrc

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in a loving God
whose Word sustains our lives
and the work of our hands in the universe.

God is life.

We believe in God's son among us
who brought the seed of life's renewal.
He lived with the poor to show the meaning of love.

Jesus Christ is Lord.

We believe in the Spirit of Life
who makes us one with God,
whose strength and energy renews our own.

The Spirit is Love.

Camillo Torres, Colombia, from 'Creed'.

Intercessions

We are a world that is desperate for you, God.

When powers struggle for dominance,
and war, oppression and abuse result;
When groups of people oppose one another
because of ideology, religion or culture;
We need a God who is bigger than ourselves,
and our personal interests.

(Prayer may be offered for specific areas of conflict in the world.)

When people are disregarded and devalued
because of poverty, geography or disease;
When compassion and justice is withheld to some
because of sexuality, race or gender;
We need a Saviour who is more compassionate than we are
who includes even those we would exclude.

atheism in the Eastern Bloc) as well as in times of plague, such the current COVID-19 pandemic, when many Christians are unable to attend the Eucharist and therefore cannot make their communion in the usual way.

(Prayer may be offered for specific people and places of suffering in the world.)

When resources are mismanaged and abused,
and the world and its creatures are destroyed;
When motivation is scarce and creativity is in short supply
to address the challenges that we face;
We need a Spirit who is more powerful and more creative
than we could ever be.

(Prayer may be offered for specific challenges and issues that we struggle with in the world.)

Lord God, Loving Saviour, Empowering Spirit,
we offer you these prayers
because we need you so desperately.
Captivate us, call us and fill us,
that we may be carriers of your eternal life
to this world that you love so dearly. Amen.

— written by John van de Laar © 2008 Sacredise.com

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.



Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

You might like to access 'Bread of the World, in mercy broken', sung here by an Australian Choir: Cantus Choro. Words are below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8382PrTBOVY>

Bread of the world, in mercy broken,
Wine of the soul, in mercy shed,

By Whom the words of life were spoken,
And in Whose death our sins are dead.
Look on the heart by sorrow broken,
Look on the tears by sinners shed;
And be Thy feast to us the token,
That by Thy grace our souls are fed.

Reginald Heber 1783-1826

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen. *(after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester)*

Post-Communion Prayer

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. Amen

Closing Prayers

God, whose word spoke life and creativity into a formless universe,
and order to a nation of escaped slaves,
whose strong and compassionate voice challenged injustice through frail prophets,
we praise you.

Jesus, whose touch smoothed the broken skin of lepers,
and brought a bleeding woman back to health and belonging,
whose hand raised dead girls, and refused to throw stones at prostitutes,
we praise you.

Spirit, whose breath restores souls and bodies,
and whose presence comforts the grieving,
whose fire ignites compassion within us for the healing of the nations,
we praise you.
God of wholeness,

we celebrate the healing you bring to us and our world,
and we celebrate the promised wholeness
that awaits all of creation
in your eternal reign.

Amen.

(From www.sacredise.com)

Grace

The readings appointed for today include 2 Corinthians 11-13. This has been amended slightly below. (Church of Scotland)

As we go from here, this we will do:

We will put things in order,
listen to the appeal of truth,
agree with one another,
and live in peace,
faithful to the God of love and peace.

So may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen

Night Prayer is on the next page

Night Prayer



If you are able to do so, you might wish to light a candle near a window.

Tonight we have a service of compline, known as Ita's compline, in which the Trinity is very much to the fore.

Ita, who died in about 570, was abbess of a women's community in Killeedy, County Limerick in Ireland. She ran a school for boys where she taught: Faith in God with purity of heart; simplicity of life with religion; generosity with love.

Among those schooled by Ita was Brendan.

Brendan is primarily renowned for his legendary journey to the Isle of the Blessed as described in the Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis (Voyage of Saint Brendan the Abbot) of the ninth century. In this story he set out with a number of monks in a small boat into the Atlantic to search for the Garden of Eden. The voyage is dated to AD 512–530. On his trip, Brendan is supposed to have seen Saint Brendan's Island, a blessed island covered with vegetation. He also landed on an island which turned out to be a giant sea monster.

Whatever the truth behind that story, Brendan was certainly a traveller, visiting Scotland, England, Wales and Brittany, and founding several monasteries. His most important foundation was probably Clonfert Cathedral, Galway, Ireland in 557 and where he was buried.

Thanks to the Northumbria Community for this liturgy www.northumbriacommunity.org

The Sacred Three
to save
to shield
to surround
the hearth
the home
this night
and every night.

Search me, O God, and know my heart.
Test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me
and lead me in the way everlasting.

O Father, O Son, O Holy Spirit,
forgive me my sins.
O only-begotten Son of the heavenly Father,
forgive.
O God who is one,
O God who is true,
O God who is first,
O God who is one substance,
O God only mighty,
in three Persons, truly merciful,
forgive.

O God of life, this night,
O darken not to me Thy light.
O God of life, this night,
close not Thy gladness to my sight.

Keep Your people, Lord,
in the arms of Your embrace.
Shelter them under Your wings.

Be their light in darkness.
Be their hope in distress.
Be their calm in anxiety.

Be strength in their weakness.

Be their comfort in pain.

Be their song in the night.

In peace will I lie down, for it is You, O Lord,
You alone who makes me to rest secure.

Be it on Your own beloved arm,
O God of grace, that I in peace shall awake.

Be the peace of the Spirit
mine this night.
Be the peace of the Son
mine this night.
Be the peace of the Father

mine this night.
The peace of all peace
be mine this night

in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

As we bring worship to a close this Trinity Sunday you might like to access the Taizé chant 'In the Lord I'll be ever thankful'. The words appear on the screen and the scenes are from around the village of Taizé.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAx8giQrsOY>

And finally St Brendan's journey prayer

God, bless to me this day,
God bless to me this night;
Bless, O bless, Thou God of grace,
Each day and hour of my life;
Bless, O bless, Thou God of grace,
Each day and hour of my life.

Thanks

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this service:

Especially to Chris for his reflections

Material is taken or developed from various websites and blogs and normally identified in the text.

