

Night Prayer

Trinity Sunday

30 May 2021



Introduction

Of all the significant days in the Christian year, Trinity Sunday is the only one that does not celebrate an event. There was no first Trinity Sunday: instead it crept in and became important as an affirmation of a belief about who God is, as a means of countering those who saw God differently, and as far as the church authorities were concerned, incorrectly. We see the results of this still in the words of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and, some will remember from the Book of Common Prayer, the Athanasian Creed, which thankfully is rarely heard today.

It is not clear exactly when this Sunday started to be observed as celebrating the Trinity. One interesting suggestion is that Thomas Becket was enthroned archbishop of Canterbury on the Sunday after Pentecost and decreed that the anniversary of his enthronement should be dedicated to the Holy Trinity. After his martyrdom in 1170 this practice seems to have spread throughout Western Europe. However it is not until Pope John XXII (1316-1334) that the feast is called to be celebrated through the entire Catholic Church.

The liturgical elements of our service this evening are for Trinity Sunday in 'Liturgies from Lindisfarne', unless otherwise acknowledged.

Opening Prayer

The three who are over our head
The three who are under our tread,
The three who are over us here,
The three who are over us there,
The three who in heaven to dwell
The three who in the great ocean swell,
Pervading Three, O be with us
Pervading Three, O be with us.

(There may be singing)

Our opening music is really associated with Pentecost which we celebrated last Sunday. Yet this modern version of the Gregorian Chant: Veni Creator Spiritus sets a gentle introduction for reflective evening worship.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEKuxUOPzk8&t=54s>

The group singing, (called Harpa Dei) are siblings, born in Germany and brought up in Ecuador. They seek to bring traditional Catholic music to a wider audience.

Psalm 29

A psalm of David.

- ¹ Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- ² Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.
- ³ The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.
- ⁴ The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is majestic.
- ⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
- ⁶ He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.
- ⁷ The voice of the Lord strikes
with flashes of lightning.
- ⁸ The voice of the Lord shakes the desert;
the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
- ⁹ The voice of the Lord twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
- ¹⁰ The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord is enthroned as King forever.
- ¹¹ The Lord gives strength to his people;
the Lord blesses his people with peace.

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.

Old Testament reading

Isaiah 6: 1-8

The vision of God in glory

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. **2** Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3** And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7** With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

8 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!”

Reflection

Isaiah’s vision of God coupled with the Psalm we used earlier shows us one aspect of God – the King transcendent over all creation. But at the end of this passage the question is asked: ‘Who will go for us?’ To do what? To act as God’s co-worker for justice in human affairs, perhaps – another aspect of who God is. Since Isaiah is enabled to say these words because

the coal from the altar has touched his lips, it also speaks of God as our personal empowerer and transformer. So within this one passage from the Old Testament we can see three distinctive ways in which we can seek to understand God.



So God is... On Trinity Sunday the first answer is 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three', though we shall probably be hard pressed if we are asked to explain exactly what it means. But is this the only answer? Are there not many other ways of completing a line that starts with God is....

You can easily suggest some from the Bible and Christian teaching: Alpha and Omega, creator and sustainer of life, Love, Light, healer, saving humanity; God is within us, and so on. There are also attributes that can be read in a variety of ways: God is... victorious in battle, dividing the sheep from the goats, correcting and punishing and so on. God may be known through Jesus: God is unknowable. We can easily tie ourselves up in knots - and to what purpose?

Surely the real point of Trinity Sunday is that we shall and do encounter God in so many different ways, and the purpose of this is not so that we may try (and largely fail) to work out some underpinning theology, but to lead and encourage us to whatever action we are capable of, that will be our 'going' for God.

Affirmation of Faith in the Three

For my shield this day I call
a mighty power, the Holy Trinity.
Faith in the Three, trust in the One,
creating all through love.

In faith I trust in the Father of all;
He is my refuge, a very strong tower.

For my shield this day I call:
Christ's power in His coming,
Christ's power in His dying,
Christ's power in His rising.

For my shield this day I call:
The mighty Spirit who breathes through all.
Faith in the Three, trust in the One,
making all through love.

(There may be singing)

'I bind unto myself this day, the strong name of the Trinity.' The words are attributed to St Patrick. Sung by Anna Purdum. It's a faster version than many, but with a distinct Irish musical edge. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPvEXj5VDQ>

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.

(We may pray 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.

(We may pray 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.

(We may pray 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, Sacredise.com)

Commission and Blessing

Day has ended,
Father, guard us sleeping.
Night has come,
Saviour, guard us sleeping.
Our minds need calm,
Spirit, guard us sleeping.
Look on us Lord,
Father guard us sleeping.
Warm us Lord,
Saviour, guard us sleeping.
We rest in you Lord,
Spirit guard us sleeping.

May the blessing of the Son
help you do what must be done.
May the spirit stroke your brow
as weary down to sleep you go.
May the father mark you rest
empower you for tomorrow's test.
May the Trinity rekindle
the pure flames of your life's candle.

(There may be singing)

We close with the 'Song to the Trinity' – one that you are unlikely to have heard before. It is sung to a traditional Irish melody so in keeping with our Celtic-style liturgy, and comes from a service for Trinity Sunday at the Catholic Parish Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Haworth and St Joseph's, Keighley, Yorkshire. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4sj0jzsgq8>

You might like to visit the online exhibition of the Chaiya Art Awards - winners 2021, on the theme: God is.... It is free and there is no requirement to register or indicate your presence.

<https://chaiyaartawards.co.uk/godis>



God is...

Alpha and Omega

One of the art works at the online exhibition.

by Larain Briggs