

The Lord be with you.

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.

Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.

Peace from the Holy Spirit the Life-giver.

The peace of the Triune God be always with you.

And also with you.

Penitential Kyries for Trinity Sunday

Father, you come to meet us when we return to you.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, you died on the cross for our sins.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Holy Spirit, you give us life and peace.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Genesis 1:1-2:4 [Six Days of Creation]

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was

so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.'

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

This is the word of the Lord;

Thanks be to God.

2Corinthians 13:11-13 [Final Greetings and Benediction]

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. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

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;

Thanks be to God.

Matthew 28:16-20 [The Commissioning of the Disciples]

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 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. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Sermon

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

Trinity. It is very difficult to find a middle way between a dry-as-dust lecture on this topic, and happy-clappy but meaningless drivel. But, here goes.

I could take a whole sermon to explore just one word - "begotten". You know where it is used: "Eternally begotten of the Father" ... and "Begotten, not made, of one being with the Father" - to procreate as the father, as my dictionary puts it.

If I asked you to explain either of those phrases from the Nicene Creed, would you have any idea where they come from, and why they are still recited today? Because that is one very good reason why we celebrate today as Trinity Sunday.

Believe it or not, our doctrine of the Trinity revolves around that single word "begotten". It goes right back to the very first Council of the Church in 325, which was called to resolve differences, especially one major one.

A priest called [Arius](#) began to spread doctrinal views that were contrary to those of his bishop, St. [Alexander of Alexandria](#). The disputed issues centred on the natures and relationship of God (the Father) and the Son of God (Jesus).

Arius emphasized the supremacy and uniqueness of God the Father, meaning that the Father alone is almighty and infinite, and that therefore the Father's divinity must be greater than the Son's.

Arius taught that the Son had a beginning [in other words, that he was "made" by God the Father], and that he possessed neither the eternity nor the true divinity of the Father, but was rather made "God" only by the Father's permission and power.

Not something that nowadays keeps us awake at night, much less threatens a split in the Church. But at that time, Arius was defeated by a huge majority, and excommunicated.

Arius' thinking "hasn't gone away, you know" to coin a phrase. It came back to haunt the Church in the Middle Ages in France and Spain, and it recurred in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 19th century, resulting in schism and bitterness.

So why should we celebrate this arcane doctrine of the Trinity, which seems to divide people rather than unite them? Well, simply because the Gospels cannot, to me, make sense in any other formulation.

A Godhead of three facets - three presences - is the only conclusion that I can take on board, if I reflect on the readings which we have listened to since Easter.

But now turn to the Creation story of Genesis for a moment – that God the Father is the entity in charge of everything: it is very Jewish. The Creation story is actually a product of Middle Eastern philosophy which made its way into Judaism when the Israelites were exiled to Babylon. It was the best way that the ancients could describe the Earth, given the state of their understanding of the physical world at the time.

Crucial to this account is the primacy of God the Father. Which is why it is read on Trinity Sunday. But that doesn't help our understanding of the Son; of the Holy Spirit – of the Trinity.

Today's second reading from Paul's second letter to the people of Corinth brings us into the Christian era. He or probably his co-writer again links us human beings to the Godhead in a simple way, without becoming mired in the nit-picking controversies of later eras. He simply ends his Letter with a form of words which we use repeatedly:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

But if we turn to the Gospel reading from the end of Matthew's Gospel, we see some premonitions of future controversy. “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.”

And then Jesus brings his concern for us human beings back into the picture: “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

So, does Arius' passionately-held nit-picking about the nature, the essence and the substance of God matter at all? Should we drop the constant repetition of the Nicene Creed? My answer is a clear “no”.

Read St. Paul's earliest Letters, such as to the people of Thessaloniki or his first to the Corinthians, where he is trying to describe and delineate what the earliest Christians believed about the Jesus figure. He had constantly to repel people who wanted to change Christianity. Then remember that they were written even before the gospels, on which we rely.

I hope you may feel as I do that it is always comforting that this Nicene creed, this statement of the kernel beliefs of Christianity, and by inference what it is NOT about, has held together since 325AD.

I would not know what to say if when asked to baptize a baby, if the very Trinitarian direction had not survived the testing of the formation of the Nicene Creed. All my pastoral work with people is grounded in our belief about the Trinity.

But stop, for a minute. How can we explain to a Muslim why we believe so fervently in the Trinity, and yet can simultaneously assert that we are a monotheistic faith? More importantly, how can we sell this to our children?

One way I can do this comes from a not-very pretty old vase which in my youthful innocence I created one boring Christmas holiday when I was in college. I have used it repeatedly to explain the three-in-one and one-in-three conundrum in simple terms. There it is.

I firmly believe that our God works in truly mysterious ways his wonders to perform! Behold the Trinity! Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

These last eight weeks of the Easter season have been, to me, an extended exploration of our Christian belief – our creed. And it all comes from the Bible – from nowhere else. So let us now declare our Apostles' creed: "I believe ..."

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;

he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;

he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen.

Intercessions, beginning with the Collect of 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 be evermore defended from all adversities;

for you live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

As the mystery of the Holy Trinity has been revealed to the Church, may she continue steadfast in that faith. Grant that our differences of order and diversity of worship may find reconciliation in love and service.

Now let the glory revealed in Jesus Christ fill the whole world with the message of salvation. May the voice of God that proclaimed him at the River Jordan be a voice to bring all nations to his service. Give clearer vision to those in positions of power and influence.

In all our relationships, in all our community, grant us the mutual love that has no limits and seeks no advantage. Be at the heart of our family lives, making them images of the love that is the Holy Trinity.

We pray for those who suffer oppression and the inequalities of society. Grant them relief and give them perfect freedom in body and mind. Be with those currently living in fear of infection and of any sickness during this pandemic; those who are in intensive care; those for whom COVID-19 has disrupted the continuation of their care and treatment.

We give thanks for the departed who now live in continual praise of God. In his presence where all mysteries are made known, may they rejoice in his glory.

Christ, who breathes upon us the Spirit of life, receive our prayers and give us peace. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever, Amen.

Dismissal: 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 with you and remain with you always.

Amen.