

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 15 June 2025 - Trinity Sunday

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Proverbs 8.1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5.1-5; John 16.12-15

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Canon Fiona Brampton, Bishop's Advisor for World Mission and Priest in Charge, North Leightonstone

Today is Trinity Sunday. For some it's the Sunday when suddenly everyone disappears, leaving the last person standing to do the talk at the service. For others, it's the Sunday that makes sense of all the other Festival days in the Christian year.

What is the Trinity and why is it so difficult? The 'Trinity' is the way we see God – Father, Son and Spirit, and describe how they relate to one another. The first Christians lived in the expectation of Jesus' 2nd coming. They understood God the creator, who had called Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. They understood the word of God in creation and written down in the law. They understood the Spirit of God who spoke the word of God through the prophets, showing them how God's life was to be lived. They knew the promises of the Messiah, God's chosen one, who would come to save them. All those who had been with Jesus spoke of their lived experience, and how they understood this for the whole of history.

We learn the early Church's theology through the great hymns of the early church found in the epistles. Colossians 1: 15-20 talks of Christ being the 'image of the invisible God'... Philippians 2 reminds us that Christ 'he was in the form of God,' but emptied himself, to become like us', We have an image of God who is seen in three persons – each person having their own work to do.

Over the course of the next centuries, particularly when persecution from the Roman Empire was eased, Christians wanted to know 'how' all the persons in God related? And how was Jesus both God and human at the same time? 1700 years ago, in 325, the Emperor Constantine called the Christian church together in the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. Constantine did much to make Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. He wanted to put an end to the often heated, violent discussions between Christians about the nature of Christ and the nature of the 3 persons of the Trinity. The Nicene Creed was finally decided at the Council of Constantinople in 381 not in Nicaea. However, it was born out of those discussions. The words of the Creed gave Christians a framework in which to work out what they believed but also the boundaries. Everything said about the nature of the persons of God, and the nature of Christ should fit within these boundaries.

Since then, others tried to find images that help us to understand the way the three persons of God are related. St Patrick used the shamrock – a single plant, a single leaf with three

sections – all are equally important and cannot live without the other, but each had their distinctiveness. Another image used is that of an equilateral triangle, where the three sides and angles are all the same size. Every corner and side is related to the other 2 in unique ways. An interwoven celtic knot is another image, where there is no beginning or end. The one continuous line is arranged in a way that each section has its own distinctive shape.

Some use the imagery of dance. The Trinity is a dance of three people. Each has their distinctive part to play. Maybe sometimes one is being lifted up by the others. The dancers are woven together. It's clear to see which dancers are doing which step, but would be impossible to take any one performer out of the dance without ruining the dance. Or maybe a piece of music – something like Bach's 'Canon in D major'. At the start the listener just hears one instrument playing a tune, but in time that tune is taken by other players on other instruments. It is different and yet the tune is instantly recognisable and all is woven together.

These images try to tell us that the persons of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are distinct but not 3 Gods. At the heart of God is an unbreakable community of love. Community isn't individuals. God created everything out of love; the spirit moved over the face of the waters; the eternal Word spoke. Love is at the heart of everything. God is love. 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,' Jesus said to Philip. If you want to know what God is like, look at the Son. The same Spirit who wrote the law on tablets of stone in Exodus writes the law of love in people's hearts on the day of Pentecost, and who lives in us. The temptations are temptations to separate the persons of the Trinity and thus destroy God. 'It is finished' was a cry that God had won – but it had cost everything.

But this is a sermon – why all the explanation of the Trinity? Well, partly so that we can understand that trying to understand the Trinity is not to be feared. However, it's really because understanding the Trinity is at the core of understanding who we are as children of God.

We are created in the image of God, Genesis tells us. What is the image of God? The image of God is love - an unbreakable community of love. That image is what we are called to be – persons who love, persons living in an unbroken community with all others. The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbour as yourself. As Jesus went on to show, our neighbour is anyone. The Good Samaritan showed love and compassion to a person whom he had most to fear.

Our call is to be in an unbreakable community of love with all that God has created. God looked at all that God had made, and it was good. God rested, to enjoy all that God had made, to spend time enjoying the harmony. God invites us to do the same – to take a sabbath to rest and enjoy creation, one another and being with God. In that, we can begin to rediscover some of the love that is at the heart of the Trinity, and find the sheer enjoyment of being in the presence of love, of loving and being loved in return.

So, let's end with one last image of Trinity - is Rublev's famous icon of the Trinity. It features the three angels who visit Abraham at the Oak of Mamre, but takes us into the presence of God the Trinity. The figures are painted sitting at table and talking. At the front of the table is an empty space. The one looking is invited to 'come and sit' – to put themselves in the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are invited to place ourselves in that

community of love, to listen, to be – and to be restored to go out once more, filled with the fullness of love.

Today, as we in worship we are invited to put ourselves in the presence of God whose very nature is love, to be restored and to go out and share that love with all we encounter –the people, the ideas and words that dominate our world and with our world itself.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder which image of the Trinity you find most helpful?
- Looking at the Rublev icon, I wonder what God might say to you as you are invited to sit at the table and talk?
- I wonder where in the world we need to see an unbroken community of love?

Suggested intercessions

Blessed Trinity
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
In one community of love;
help us to realise the love in which we are created,
in whose image we are made.

We pray for your Church throughout the world.
Guide all our efforts with your love,
that your life unites us,
despite all that tries to pull us apart.

We pray for those who are called
to choose our Archbishop and the next Bishop of Ely.
We pray for our own parishes and all with whom we share ministry/

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

We pray for our world,
created in love
and yearning for love to rule once more.
We pray for those parts of the world
where hatred and fear has turned to war and domination;
we pray for a world itself,
where our desire for more than we need
is threatening the planet's existence.
We pray for all those working for peace.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who need to be touched by love at this time.
We pray for families and friends split apart,
some by their own reasons
others the victims of conflicts and natural disasters.

We pray for those separated from one another
by health issues or for the hope of a better future
We pray for those who are making that final journey
Into your eternal life.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

We look forward to that time when we will be united with all who love you,
And united in the presence of the eternal Trinity.
Amen

Suggested hymns/songs

Sing to God new songs of worship

Holy, holy, holy

I bind unto myself today

Father, Lord of all creation

Thou, whose almighty word

The God of Abraham praise

God the creator, you in love made me (Iona)

Father, we adore you

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy one is here

When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

Let us build a house where love can dwell.

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)