

## **Trinity Sunday – a liturgy for worship at home**

### **Introduction**

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

To many of us today's feast of the Trinity may not be as stirring and touching as Christmas, Easter or Pentecost, yet it sums up all of these. It is simply the feast of one God who shows three loving 'faces' to us. We can call this God Father, we can call God our brother through Christ; we can call God our living breath in the Spirit, who is the force and life and love that keeps us alive and moving and building God's community and world. And if we want to sum up God in one word (or three), we can say: God is Love. If God loves us so much we can do no less than love one another.

### **Act of Penitence**

Holy, holy, holy. When our eyes have seen the Lord of hosts, we echo the words of Isaiah (in our first reading today), 'Woe is me, I am lost.' We long for the fire of God's cleansing to touch our unclean lips, for our iniquity to be removed and our sins wiped out. We ask pardon from the Lord our God that we have not always answered his love.

Lord Jesus, you revealed to us a Father who cares for us deeply:  
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you loved us to the end by laying down your life for us:  
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you pour out on us the Spirit of unity and love:  
Lord, have mercy.

Gentle and merciful God, have mercy on us and forgive us all our sins and help us respond to your boundless love that leads us forward to everlasting life.  
Amen.

### **Act of Praise**

*The Gloria as follows, or some other hymn of praise:*

*Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.*

*For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

### **Collect of the Day**

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 our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Today's readings**

*A reading from the Prophet Isaiah*

*(6: 1 – 8)*

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” 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!”

*For the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.*

*Psalm 29: 1 – 4 & 9 – 10*

Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.

The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

*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.*

*A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans*

*(8: 12 – 17)*

Brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

*For the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.*

*Acclamation to greet the Gospel:*

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.

Alleluia.

*Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (3: 1 – 17)*

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

*For the Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you, O Christ.*

## Homily

We have come together in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in other words, in the name of the Holy Trinity. We began the service as we begin every service with those words, and if you said 'Amen,' you have indicated that you believe these words to be true.

Today, Trinity Sunday, we appear to be simply reminding ourselves that our faith is Trinitarian. In view of those words we began with, which are repeated in some way throughout the service, such a reminder would seem unnecessary, but as I mentioned in my mailed out reflection on Friday (which I'm sure you have all read!), today is an opportunity to pause and reflect upon the wonder of it all, and the mystery of the God we worship.

I agree with the eminent Franciscan Richard Rohr who explains that 'mystery is not something you cannot understand; rather, it is something that you can endlessly understand! There is no point at which you can say, "I've got it." Always and forever, mystery gets you!'

When we describe God, we can only use similes, analogies, and metaphors. All God language is an approximation at best. We can say, "It's like . . ." or "It's similar to . . ."; but we can never say with absolute certainty, "This is what it is . . ." We have to accept that we are in the realm of beyond, of transcendence, of mystery. And we must maintain humility before the Divine who is the Great Mystery; otherwise, religion worships itself and its formularies and symbols instead of God. And we can become complicit if our faith, or at least our church-going, becomes confused with and conditional on, for example, the church building or the form of the service or the kind of music, or even the vicar.

What we can affirm with confidence is that the Trinity is the fruit of the Christian experience of God. It suggests that we come to know God by participating in the life of God. This is at the heart of the dialogue in our Gospel reading today. Jesus tells Nicodemus that only when we are born again of water and the Spirit is it possible truly to know God. It is by being drawn by the Holy Spirit into God's life and love that we come to have faith in and knowledge of God, and God as Trinity.

God chose to make his self-giving life and love visible in human form. The Word became flesh and lived among us, as John writes in the prologue to his Gospel. And in today's reading: God loved the world so much that he gave his

Son...so that through him we may have eternal life. Jesus was God's revelation to human beings in human form, showing as one of us what God is like, how God loves all life, his beloved creation, and how God longs for human beings to know him, reveal his nature and values in this life, and ultimately come to be with him eternally.

After his resurrection, Jesus enters the realm of God, the realm of the Spirit, the Spirit who is then poured upon the followers of Jesus as a third manifestation of God's being. The Spirit, whose coming we celebrated last Sunday, Pentecost, is the final revelation of God before the end of time, preparing us for the age to come. The Spirit is the pledge that our life is a journey whose destiny is full union with God.

The Doctrine of the Trinity began to take shape in the pages of the New Testament but took three hundred more years of Christian experience to formulate. It provides the specifically Christian way of speaking about God. It summarizes what it means to participate in the life of God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The mystery of God is revealed in Christ and the Spirit as the mystery of love, gathering us together in the body of Christ, making us into people who are in full communion with God and with every creature.

The way God comes to us is also our way to God and to each other: through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This our faith, confessed in the creeds and celebrated in the sacraments. In particular, it is the fruit of the experience of a Church that has placed the breaking of the bread at the centre of its life. The Eucharist is the summit of the Christian life of prayer, and it focuses all that the Christian life is about. In this act of worship, we demonstrate the life by which we are fed. We actively and intentionally participate in the being of God. And because God's life is one of self-giving love, to be drawn into God's life is necessarily to find ourselves being sent out in love for the world.

Confessing our faith, such as we do in baptism, confirmation, in the creeds, and in a practical way in Holy Communion, is incomplete and ineffective unless it becomes a way of life. Living faith in the God of Jesus Christ means allowing ourselves to be transformed by God so that we become persons who are constantly growing in communion with everyone and every created thing; becoming Christ to one another, becoming by the power of the Holy Spirit what God is: love unbounded, glory uncontained.

*A few moments of silent reflection are recommended.*

**The Profession of Faith**, either the following or one of the traditional creeds:

*We believe in God the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.*

*We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.*

*We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.*

*We believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

To God the Father, who first loved us, and made us in His own image;

To God the Son who loves us, and died that we might truly live;

To God the Holy Spirit, who grows the love of God in our hearts and compels us to share it with others:

We raise our prayers to you today, most Holy and Undivided Trinity.

Gracious God, fountain of all wisdom, we pray for all Christian people; for Robert and David our bishops, and for all who teach and guard the faith. We especially pray for Evangelists, missionaries, youth workers and Sunday School teachers. We ask your blessing on John and Rosemary and all who worship you here at St. Francis; help us to serve one another and all who visit us as Christ has served us all.

We pray today for Canon Medhat and his people of St George's Madrid, and especially for Solomon Uche, who is this morning being ordained Deacon by Bishop David, to serve as assistant curate there.

May the word of Christ dwell richly in all our hearts and knit us together in the bond of your love.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer.**

Father God we pray for the leaders of the nations, and for those in authority under them. Give them all a desire to work for international unity, seeking to halt the threat of war and terrorism, and that the common good of all humanity may be served by their efforts. Bless Britain and Spain and their

governments, especially as they seek to bring an end to the Pandemic restrictions. May their decisions bring unity and a sense of justice to all.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer**

Spirit of God we pray for those who do not believe, and for those of hesitant belief. Open their ears to hear your voice, and open their hearts to receive you, the very Spirit of life. We pray for those in our own families and among our friends who do not know or love you. Break into their lives we pray, that they too may know your all-encompassing love.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer**

Gracious God we pray for those weighed down with grief, fear or sickness. May Christ your living Word bring them comfort and healing. We especially raise before you now those we know or have been asked to pray for including Clifford Bromley, Carol Hart and Margery Lee.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer**

Loving God we give thanks for all who have died in the faith of Christ, and we rejoice with them and all your saints, trusting in the promise of your word of Life Eternal fulfilled through your son Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer**

Lord of the Church, hear our prayers, and make us one in heart and mind to serve you with joy for ever.

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

Moved by the Holy Spirit, we cry out to God our Father in the words of Jesus the Son:

**Our Father.....**

*You may wish to offer this or an alternative prayer of spiritual communion, and/or in silence just sit in the peace of the ever-present Lord for a while.*

In union, dear Father, with Christian people throughout the world and across the centuries gathered to make Eucharist, hearing your holy word and receiving the Precious Body and Blood, I offer you praise and thanksgiving.

Even though I am exiled from tasting the Bread of Heaven and drinking the Cup of Life, I pray that you will unite me with all the baptised and with your Son

who gave his life for us. Come Lord Jesus, dwell in me and send your Holy Spirit that I may be filled with your presence. Amen.

### **Concluding 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.

### **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 with you, and with those you love and pray for, today and always. Amen.

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ. Amen.