



## Trinity Sunday Praise *(led by Revd David Treharne)*

**I GREET YOU 'IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.'**



This Trinitarian greeting and accompanying action is a great way to start worship on Trinity Sunday. Our brothers and sisters in the great orthodox Christian traditions of the East have always talked more about God as trinity than the church in the West, and in their prayers they often make the sign of the Cross in a particular way that links with the Trinity. You may have noticed this before, or maybe not.

They start making the sign of the Cross by joining the tops of the index finger, the second finger and the thumb of the right hand. This symbolising belief in God the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit together equally worshipped and glorified. The ring finger and the little finger are folded into the palm, signifying the belief that the Son of God became a human being... he was truly man and truly God... 2 natures.. human and divine.

So with the hand held like this, the Orthodox Christian then makes the sign of the Cross first touching the forehead, then stomach, then his right shoulder followed by the left. In this way the individual is reminded to dedicate their whole being to Christ in fulfilment of the commandment to 'love the Lord thy God with all your mind, soul, heart and strength.' (Matt 22 or Luke 10). Using the Cross is a reminder of salvation and eternal life won for us through the Cross of Christ.

Finally there is a slight bowing of the head... a reminder of the tax collector in parable Jesus tells in Luke 18, who threw himself upon the mercy of God with great humility... "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." The bow is about right humility, reverence and submission before God.

Leader: O Lord, open our lips  
**All: And our mouths shall proclaim your praise**  
Leader: Let us worship the Lord  
**All: All praise to his name**

### INTRODUCTORY PRAYERS

Loving Lord, fill us with your life-giving, joy-giving, peace-giving presence, that we may praise you now with our lips and all the day long with our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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As our prayer rises before you, O God, so may your mercy come down upon us to cleanse our hearts and set us free to sing your praise now and for ever. Amen.



## CONFESSION

Love of Jesus Fill us. Holy Spirit Guide us. Will of the Father be done.  
In the silence of our hearts, let us pray to the Lord, bringing our failures to live to his praise and glory.

### *Silence*

**O King enthroned on high, filling the earth with your glory: holy is your name, Lord God almighty. In our sinfulness we cry to you to take our guilt away, and to cleanse our lips to speak your word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

As our prayer rises before you, O God, so may your mercy come down upon us to cleanse our hearts, and set us free from sin to seek your face, here and always. **Amen.**

## COLLECT

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. Amen!

## THE EARLY CHURCH

The doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found explicitly in the Bible, however, all the ingredients of trinitarianism can be found there. A trinitarian God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was the only reasonable answer for the first Christians and early Church as they made sense of the Scriptures and their experience of God.

The Unity of God is certainly there in the Bible: – the Lord our God, the Lord in one. Deut 6:4, Mark 12:28. This was the heart of the Israelite faith and Jesus' teaching. It affirms the uniqueness and oneness of God. The NT identifies Jesus as Lord and God without compromising the oneness of God (1 Corinthians 8:6). God is one and undivided. Christians are staunch monotheists not tritheists.

But there is also plurality of God in the Bible: There are signs in the OT that the one God is also plural, communal and relational. Gen 1:26, Gen 3:22, Gen 11:6-7 & Isa 6:8. We read in Scripture that the Spirit of God is seen to be both one with God and distinct from him at the same time.

But it is of course the NT that has loads of references to the Trinity.

The New Testament writers just wrote about their experience of God such as at Jesus' baptism where there was a booming voice, the dove and Jesus himself (Matt 3:13-17). They didn't immediately get to questions like how God can be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, over the years these questions arose.

## READINGS

### **2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-END**

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints

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greet you. <sup>13</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

## **MATTHEW 28:16-20**

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

## **REFLECTION ON MATTHEW 28:16-20**

In that reading the disciples go to Galilee to where Jesus directed them... when they see him they worship him... but some doubted. I love the authenticity of this. After all the resurrection appearances, after seeing and conversing with Jesus and realising who he is... some doubted. When it says that they doubted it is not that they wouldn't believe, but rather than the whole experience they were going through was so mysterious and overwhelming and uncertain that they were hesitant, probably slightly dazed and couldn't quite take it all in. The disciples had had little time to process what had happened.

They also had little time to process what was to happen next. I am sure there would have been a real feeling of uncertainty about the future for them. And that really resonates with us today. The certainty that many of us felt about life and the future because of the Coronavirus pandemic. What does the future hold for many businesses, for the church, the economy and for our own individual lives and relationships? There is great uncertainty at the moment.

Even as the disciples worship and we worship today, there is doubt and uncertainty. In response Jesus doesn't scold. No, he speaks reassuring words.

He begins by saying "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." And after telling the disciples what they needed to do Jesus concludes by saying that he will be with them always.

ALL authority in heaven and on earth. All is held in his hands. He is the one who reigns over all. He reigns in all, through all and over all. So whatever the future, whatever the anxiety, whatever the uncertainty we can look to him.

Importantly to back this up Jesus says I will be with you always. At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel Jesus is referred to as Emmanuel, God with us. Here now, at the end of the Gospel Jesus promises a continuation of his presence with all disciples in all times and places.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE TRINITY**

Jane Williams (wife of Rowan Williams) writes about the Trinity wonderfully in the book "The fellowship of the Three" ...

*"'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit' are not proper names, like Julie, Jane and Jennifer. They are terms of relation. They are more like 'nephew', 'aunt' and 'sister'. That may be obvious with 'Father and Son', but it applies equally to 'Holy Spirit'.*

*Each member of the Trinity spends time showing us the others. The Father is known through the Son, the Spirit forms the Son in the Son's followers, the Father gives us the Son, Father and Son together give us the Spirit, Son and Spirit teach us to worship the Father, and so on. There is identity of nature, purpose and will*

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*in this God, who is undivided but exists in three Persons. The technical term for talking about this circular way in which God makes himself known is perichoresis or co-inherence."*

The famous 15<sup>th</sup> Century Icon of the Trinity by Andrea Rublev (not the young Russian tennis star) conveys this relationship. You may have seen it in the background of some of my early Vicarage recordings. It shows the relationship of God... how the 3 persons of the Trinity relate to one another yet remain One entity.

Very occasionally, when for example we are in love, we might get some idea how something can be more than one and yet united, but most of the time, we struggle to get it. But that *IS* what God's being is - a dynamic unity, three yet one. A way of being that our hearts long for, but do not understand.

As I wrote in the Parish briefing this week...

It is important for us to use our God given minds in matters of faith it is even more important to get to a place where we realise God as Trinity is not a mathematical formula to be worked out but rather a remarkable relationship (and mystery) to be experienced and enjoyed. St Bernard says, *"How can plurality consist with unity, or unity with plurality? To examine the fact closely is rashness, to believe it is piety, to know it is life, and life eternal."* To have an inner knowing and experience of the Trinitarian God is awesome!

SO don't get too hung up on trying to work out God. As St John Chrysostom, says, **"A comprehended God is no God."** Instead, take that which God has revealed to us, namely His Son Jesus Christ. Look at Him who is revealed in the Gospels and get a really good glimpse of God! And be open to God the Holy Spirit who makes God the Father and God the Son present in us.

When Jesus told his disciples to baptise in the NAME (notice it's singular and not plural... it's name, not names) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I think he was saying that we are to be plunged and immersed into the life of God. For his presence to envelop us so that we know truly he is with us always. For him to reign within us, for us to union with him and be transformed more and more into the likeness of God.

In John's Gospel (John 14:23) Jesus says "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

This gets to the heart of Christian faith. God residing with us and in us...

### **St Elizabeth of the Trinity**

One person whose devotion I find inspirational is St Elizabeth of the Trinity. Elizabeth was a French Carmelite nun, mystic and a spiritual writer who lived at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. From the time of her First Communion in 1891, she "wanted to give her life and to return a little of His great love." Despite many offers of marriage she had her heart set on giving herself to God alone. On her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday she had her mother's blessing at last to enter the Carmelite religious community in Dijon, close to her home. Everything led Elizabeth to her "Three," the Trinity.

Elizabeth became ill shortly after entering the religious life and suffered for five years from a stomach ailment, now thought to have been Addison's disease. Her suffering was intense both spiritually and physically; but this only caused her love for Jesus to increase. She died November 1906 aged just 26. Her last words were: "I am going to Light, to Love, to Life!" Yet she left us some beautiful devotional material to aid our relationship with God the Holy Trinity. Let us listen to and join in with Elizabeth's powerful prayer...

*O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to become utterly forgetful of myself so that I may establish myself in you, as changeless and calm as though my soul were already in eternity. Let nothing disturb my peace nor draw me forth from you, O my unchanging God, but at every moment may I penetrate more deeply into the depths of your mystery. Give peace to my soul; make it your heaven, your cherished dwelling-place and the place of your repose. Let me never leave you there alone, but keep me there, wholly attentive, wholly alert in my faith, wholly adoring and fully given up to your creative action.*

*O my beloved Christ, crucified for love, I long to be the bride of your heart. I long to cover you with glory, to love you even unto death! Yet I sense my powerlessness and beg you to clothe me with yourself. Identify my soul with all the movements of your soul, submerge me, overwhelm me, substitute yourself for me, so that my life may become a reflection of your life. Come into me as Adorer, as Redeemer and as Saviour.*

*O Eternal Word, utterance of my God, I want to spend my life listening to you, to become totally teachable so that I might learn all from you. Through all darkness, all emptiness, all powerlessness, I want to keep my eyes fixed on you and to remain under your great light. O my Beloved Star, so fascinate me that I may never be able to leave your radiance.*

*O Consuming Fire, Spirit of Love, overshadow me so that the Word may be, as it were incarnate again in my soul. May I be for him a new humanity in which he can renew all his mystery.*

*And you, O Father, bend down towards your poor little creature. Cover her/him with your shadow, see in her/him only your beloved son in who you are well pleased*

*O my 'Three', my All, my Beatitude, infinite Solitude, Immensity in which I lose myself, I surrender myself to you as your prey. Immerse yourself in me so that I may be immersed in you until I go to contemplate in your light the abyss of your splendour!*

Many people over the years, not just saints like Elizabeth, have discovered and experienced the beauty of immersing themselves in the mystery of God. And we can too! Union with God is open to all... it's not just an exclusive club but a gift and invitation for all humanity!

## **PRAYERS**

God, we praise you: Father all-powerful, Christ Lord and Saviour, Spirit of Love. You reveal yourself in the depths of our being, drawing us to share in your life and your love. One God, three Persons, be near to the people formed in your image, close to the world your love brings to life. We ask you this, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, true and living, forever and ever. **Amen.**

- We pray for the Church, that she may always do relationship well. And for our Parishes locally that we might live life together in the love of God the three in One.
- We pray for the peace and unity of the world, as God is three persons and yet a perfect Unity, may all peoples be joined together in peace and may conflict come to an end. With the issue of racism showing itself again we particularly pray that we may all see those who are different to us with God's eyes.
- We pray for those who suffer and for those who care for them, may the love of the Holy Trinity be their hope and comfort.
- We pray for a renewal of our baptismal commitment, may we who have been baptised in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit be faithful to the vows which were made and journey through life in the knowledge of your presence with us always.

I bind my mind to the mind of the Creator God and I loose from my mind all that offends my God that I may worship completely. I bind my body to the will of the Saviour Christ and I loose from my body all dis-ease that I may serve freely. I bind my spirit to the Holy Spirit my helper and I loose from my spirit all that is not of my God that I may love joyfully. **Amen.**

Rejoicing in the glory of God, let us pray as Christ has taught us,  
**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.**

### **CONCLUSION & FINAL BLESSING**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father who made all things?

**We believe and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed the world?

**We believe and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God?

**We believe and trust in him**

This is the faith of the Church

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Before the final blessing I leave you with one rather important word Jesus gave at the end of Matthew's Gospel. "Go." Go and make disciples. Go and share the love of God in word and deed. Be a courageous disciple. Pass on that which you have received. Be the light of the world in Jesus' name.

The Lord bless you and keep you. **AMEN**

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. **AMEN.**

The Lord look lovingly on you and give you his peace. **AMEN**

The Lord God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the holy and undivided Trinity, guard you, save you, and bring you to that heavenly city, where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. **AMEN**