

ST STEPHEN'S HOME SERVICE – SUNDAY 7th JUNE 2020
TRINITY SUNDAY

INTRODUCTION

One of the really wonderful "silver linings" to come out of the Lockdown has been the renewed sense of community which so many have noticed and applauded. And yet in recent days, with the tragic death in the USA of George Floyd and the global protests which have followed, we have been reminded of how deep some divisions in society run.

The Doctrine of the Trinity which we celebrate today – "One God in Three Persons" – is hard, perhaps impossible, to understand with our intellects. But it reminds us that at the very heart of God there is both difference and community – relationships of love which overflow to the whole world. All of us are different, too, and currently separated from one another; but we are drawn and bound together by something far deeper and more powerful than race, or interests, or even creed. We are bound together by the love of God for each and every one of us. Take a moment now to rest in that love and the deep community it brings.

OPENING BIBLE VERSE AND PRAYER

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:3)

**O God, you are at the heart of creation.
Your word brings life into being;**

**your peace gives living its fulfilment;
your Spirit unites us into your Son.
We draw near, seeking your love in our hearts;
your wisdom in our minds; your power in our lives.
Receive us with grace, in the name of your Son. Amen**

TURNING AGAIN TO GOD

You are the never-ceasing gift of love;
Yet we treat love as a scarce commodity.
Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy.

You call us to share in your abundant life;
Yet we think we are not worthy.

Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy.

You come to us in the vulnerability of the Word made flesh;
Yet we still put celebrity and power on a pedestal.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

**Light of Christ, shine into our hearts.
Shine into the dark places of hurt and pain.
Shine into the dark places of sadness and regret.
Light of Christ, shine into our hearts.**

**Creator of the world, loving Father;
Jesus, light of the world;
Spirit, whose delight it is to make us like Jesus;
Holy God, we welcome you now.**

NEW TESTAMENT READING (2 Corinthians 13:11-13)

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.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING (Matthew 28:16-20)

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped 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."

Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION *(by Revd Stephen Malkinson)*

I remember a senior priest remark to me that he had rarely heard a sermon on the Holy Trinity, where there wasn't some

hint of heresy somewhere. So I will try my best to steer clear of being labelled a potential heretic!

At the time Jesus was born, the Jews saw God not only as a creator God, who by his spirit brought all things into being, but also as a Father figure. Jesus showed us what God is really like - a God of love. Jesus' death and resurrection showed us how deep that love really was. As St John says 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life'. Jesus taught us is that there is no limit to God's love for us - in spite of everything. Jesus is indeed the Son of the Almighty God, and as we celebrated last week, the Holy Spirit is also part of the Godhead. Apparently not one but three. Over the centuries many have tried to square the apparent circle - how can God be three and at the same time one?

We mostly use the Nicene creed at a communion service, which tells us about God as Father the creator, as Son the redeemer and as Holy Spirit the sanctifier. Years back I remember that for Morning Prayer on Trinity Sunday it was prescribed to use another much longer creed known as the Athanasian creed. It goes into much greater depth about the relationship of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (If sometime you want to read it through you can find it in the 1662 prayer book under the title at Morning Prayer.) It is a result of trying to understand the nature of the Godhead, and

took a very long time to get there, not until the end of the 5th century, a hundred years after the death of Athanasius himself!

If so far I have managed to confuse rather than make things a little clearer, we need to remember that what we are attempting to do is to put into a form of words the very nature of God himself, which we know really is impossible. How can the created fully understand the creator of everything when he is, as the Athenasian creed says, incomprehensible?

A very wise priest said that to the people in his parish he was known as Father John. It was a loving relationship between him as parish priest and the people. But when he went home he was just plain John to his wife who knew him and loved him inside out. To his children he was a Father and someone whom they loved and called Dad. The same John, but seen by those who knew him in three distinct ways. We rejoice in that fact today that although we will never completely understand God as Trinity, what we do know is that God's love for us is limitless, unconditional and eternal.

As we travel on our Christian journey we keep by us the very first credal formula found in what we know as the grace, which is to be found at the end of St Paul's second letter to the

Corinthians. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all'.

HYMN FOR REFLECTION....

Father of Heaven, Whose Love profound
A ransom for our souls hath found,
Before Your Throne we humbly bend,
To us Your pardoning Love extend.

Almighty Son, Incarnate Word,
Our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord;
Before Your Throne we humbly bend,
To us Your saving Grace extend.

Eternal Spirit, by Whose Breath
The soul is raised from sin and death;
Before Your Throne we humbly bend,
To us Your quickening Power extend.

Thrice Holy! Father, Spirit, Son;
Mysterious Godhead, Three in One,
Before Your Throne we humbly bend,
Grace, Pardon, Life, to all extend. Amen.

PRAYERS

Called by the great God we worship,
Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

We bring before you the needs of the Church,
In its weakness and in its potential;
Revive and refresh us, teach and direct us,
Inspire all who teach, preach, and simply talk about the good
news,
And uphold all those who suffer for their faith in any way.

Silence

God of mystery and compassion:

You know us and you love us.

We bring before you
The particular problems of these times in which we are living;
Renew in us a commitment to community and mutual trust,
Give a profound sense of value to all who feel despised and
excluded;
Protect the vulnerable
And where we feel overwhelmed by the suffering around us,
give us hearts to feel your compassion.

Silence

God of mystery and compassion:

You know us and you love us.

We bring before you
The nurturing of our children and young people,
In homes and parenting, schools and teaching,

In the expectations, pressures and dangers,
In the hopes and possibilities for good.

Silence

God of mystery and compassion:

You know us and you love us.

We bring before you, O God,
The hungry and malnourished,
The greedy and complacent;
Those who are ill and those who care for them;
The unhappy and those who comfort them;
All who are waiting for surgery;
And all who have no one to turn to.

We take a few moments to remember before God those who
are struggling with illness – those we know, and those we
don't.

Silence

God of mystery and compassion:

You know us and you love us.

Living God, we remember those who have died
And pray for them now.
Lead them into the light of eternity,
And keep us all in the Way that leads us
To share your everlasting life.

Among those whose anniversaries fall at this time, we remember Johanna Anwyl-Hughes, Wendy Anwyl-Hughes, Jill Scholes, Hilda Stewart, Roland Hill, Freda Hemmings, May Brown, Iain McBain, Ugo Frascina, and Geoff Clarke. We remember, too, the victims of Coronavirus, and the medical staff who have given their lives in service of others; and George Floyd and those who have lost their lives in the demonstrations following his death

Silence

God of mystery and compassion:

You know us and you love us.

We bring before you, O God,
Our lives and all that we are,
Including our successes and our failures;
We thank you for the gift of life
And ask that we may get to know you more deeply
Day after day.

Merciful Father

Accept these prayers

For the sake of your Son,

Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (this version, or the traditional one)

Being made one by the power of the Spirit, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

ENDING

**May the Father in his outrageous love accept us for who
we are.**

**May the incarnate Word touch and hold us in the days
ahead.**

**May the Spirit's promptings lead us to risk ourselves for
love.**

**And may the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and
Holy Spirit,**

Be with us all, now and evermore.

Amen.

SONG Bind us together, Lord, bind us together

With cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord,

Bind us together in love.

There is only one God, there is only one King,

There is only one Body, that is why we sing....