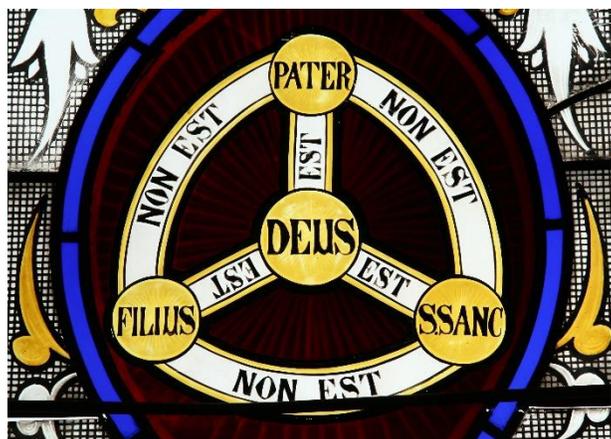




ST. ELIZABETH EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Today is Trinity Sunday, the feast that always follows Pentecost in which we celebrate "the one and equal glory" of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, "in Trinity of Persons and in Unity of Being." It is one of the seven principal feasts of the church year and it honors the mystery of God who is love without exception and without end; God who is immediately apprehended yet never fully comprehended.

God is beyond us – utterly transcendent – and yet, always closer than our own heartbeats. God is not one “being” among other beings, but Being-Itself; the undefinable fullness of God that

we can never contain. God does not *have* thoughts or awareness; God *is* Awareness-Itself. God does not *have* love; God *is* Love-Itself. God is not one and not many.

The Trinity that can be spoken of is not the eternal Trinity, and yet we must say something. All we can use are symbols. Our words become maps of human minds thinking about God. Maps aren't the territory, and yet they can help orient us toward the Divine. We can never capture all of God's truth, and so we must rely on poetic and symbolic language. Whatever we say about the One Triune God must remain exploratory and provisional, never exhaustive.

We talk about the “One Triune God” because poetic descriptions of God allow us to name the supreme awareness in which all possibilities exist like thoughts exist in the human mind. We can describe infinity, uncreated, yet arising as self-luminous awareness, the light of wisdom giving form and intelligibility to all things. God within all God's children works to shape us all toward our own unique fulfillment as people and as communities who raise up those who are not free to fulfill God's yearning for them. We notice the breath of God within us inspiring us to courage and generosity, to humility and insight, encouraging us to braid our lives with God's in the creation of beauty, goodness and truth; in the pursuit of justice and compassion in the face of racism, hatred and greed.

And so, rather than belaboring the pursuit of the perfect description of the Trinity, we can share experiences of the life-changing reality of God. God comes to people in as many different ways as there are people to receive. That's the mystery. And that mystery compels us to open our hearts and minds to those who most need the life-giving breath of God – the Presence given to each of us to be given away to each other; diverse in our unity.

Preparation

On Trinity Sunday at St. Elizabeth, the altar and priests are arrayed in our beautiful Portuguese set. The name tells you the background of this liturgical fabric. It is a multi-colored Indo-Portuguese design dating from the 18th century. The design is centered on a large and colorful floral motif, with bird accents on the stoles. The woven tapestry altar cloth and stoles are on a cream foundation that matches the priest's chasuble. The floral colors



include blue, gold, rose and deep red, but what makes the cloth especially appropriate for Trinity Sunday is the emphasis of green as we move from the liturgical colors of white, gold and red used in Pascha to the green of ordinary time. Our altar cloth also features three prominent crosses on a pair of green vertical stripes (called "orphreys," if you want a word that wins Scrabble games).

And so, during our temporary physical separation, you may want to consider dressing your own table in similar fashion with photos or real flowers and greens. If you have an icon, a cross or a rosary, you may want to array these out by a candle before starting to pray. And you may want to contact friends or family by phone or through social media, or invite loved ones that we no longer see or saints that you admire.

Listening to liturgically appropriate music before or between readings or prayer is also a good way to enhance your prayer life at home. You can hear the remarkable boys choir from Brazil, called Canarinhos de Petrópolis, chanting a motet (Tibi laus, tibi gloria) here on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ1awU9yDCA> The Latin (Tibi laus, tibi gloria, tibi gratiarum actio in saecula sempiterna, O beata Trinitas) translates into English as: "To you be praise, to you be glory, to you be thanksgiving, for ever and ever, O blessed Trinity. You may find this uplifting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GrQJGQWfd8> This is the Schola Gregoriana Mediolanensis chanting the ancient Veni Creator Spiritus that concludes with a lovely prayer to the Trinity: "Through thee may we the Father know, through thee th'eternal Son, and thee the Spirit of them both, thrice-blessed three in One."

Or you may prefer this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miFQoHvOTaw>, one of my personal favorite hymns. "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," our Hymn 657, seems particularly poignant in this season of anger, frustration and concern. This lush and moving recording comes from the Cambridge Singers, an English mixed voice chamber choir that director John Rutter formed in 1981. Something right about singing the words "visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart," especially as we contemplate our part in fostering our common humanity while compassionately honoring genuine lived differences.

A gentle reminder that when Episcopalians worship in the church or in the home, we use the plural – "we," "us" and "our" – even when we are worshipping by ourselves or temporarily apart from each other physically. We are also always bound together in Christ.

Trinity Sunday 7 June 2020

Centering

Make the sign of the cross as the leader says: Blessed be God; (+) Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

The leader prays: Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Word of God for the Feast of Trinity Sunday

The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read.

A reading from Genesis: When God began to create heaven and earth – the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and the spirit of God sweeping over the water – God said, “Let there be light: and there was light. God saw that they 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, a first day.

God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water.” God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

God said, “Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called the Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times – the days and the years; and they serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” God created the great sea monsters, and all



the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms, and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind.” And it was so. God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.” And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.”

God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; that they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, I give all the plants for food.” And it was so. And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work, and He ceased on the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

(The response: Prayed together or by alternating verses) Psalm 8

YaH, our Master!
How mighty is Your fame all over Earth;
such Glory You radiate from the Heavens.

Your strength is founded
in babes' and toddlers' first speech;
it can overcome all your vengeful foes.
I am awed when I see Your skies,
Your handiwork and fingerprints.

The moon and Stars
You have arranged.

What are we who must die,
that You would be mindful of us?
What is a human being
that You should take notice?

Yet we are only a touch less than divine.
You crowned us with glorious splendor.

You sent us to manage
all that You designed.
All of it, You have made our responsibility:
Flocks, herds, all of them,
as well as the animals of the wild –
birds of sky,
fish of sea
who traject the oceans.

YaH, our Master!
How splendid is Your Name
in all this world.

A reading from Second Corinthians: 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.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God





Read the gospel aloud without rushing. Allow the images to enter your awareness and find a home within.

A reading from Matthew: ...the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus appointed them. And seeing him, they prostrated themselves; but some doubted. And, approaching, Jesus spoke to them, saying, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, instruct all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you; and see: I am with you every day until the consummation of the age.”

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

Sermon: On Trinity Sunday, some of us are like bees drawn to nectar. It’s as though, on Trinity Sunday, clergy and theologians can be mesmerized into preaching a carefully constructed and reasoned explanation of the Holy Trinity. We become fascinated by the “mysterium absolutum” or we give in to the impulse to lay out the history of Trinitarian theology. We imagine that everyone is intrigued by inquiries into the immanent and economic Trinity.

But none of that is on the Gospel author’s mind. And none of that is on our hearts and minds this morning. On *this* Trinity Sunday, in this parish and around the world, there are concerns that are more of the heart than of the mind. And in these, the last five lines of Matthew’s Gospel, there are words of reassurance and strength. They have almost nothing to do with theories about the Trinity and almost everything to do with our relationship with the Holy One and with each other.

Let me show you what I mean: Just before this reading, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary encountered the Risen Christ who told them not to be afraid and gave them a message to pass along about where he would meet his friends. And so, following the women’s guidance, the 11 remaining disciples have returned to Galilee.

Eleven people. Not hundreds of trained, influential champions with deep pockets, but eleven people who are still traumatized by the murder of their friend and teacher just days before. Against all reasonable expectation, their murdered teacher has appeared to them.

The translation that we heard this morning, like many, presents Matthew's Greek as "they prostrated themselves [in worship], but *some* doubted," as though a few of them offered devotion and a few of them harbored questions. Maybe. But devotion and doubt are not mutually exclusive. In fact, as we mature in our faith, these become increasingly intertwined and fruitful. A more accurate rendering of Matthew's Greek portrays this more complex and realistic human emotional response. Consequently, when this remnant of loyal followers saw Jesus, "they worshipped but they doubted."

You and I are and other loyal followers have come to this holy space to offer their devotion *and* their doubt. Among the people who are filled with gratitude, there are people bringing hearts broken open by grief, pouring out love in a different way. Among those finding moments of serenity are people in relationships fraught with frustration offering all the trust they can muster. Worshiping beside people brimming with enthusiasm are people wrestling with unfair or unjust life circumstances who are rightfully hoping and waiting for God's intervention.

We are a small group of loyal followers, including worshipping doubters, who have brought *all* of ourselves before the God that we adore. Having seen the Risen Christ, we worship even as we question. This is not a sinful position to be in, but for many, it is a painful place.

Matthew's Jesus gave an astonishing answer to the small and traumatized gathering of 11 disciples. But the answer is in desperate need of rehabilitation. What we hear is: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...." And that phrase may be one of the most influential in the entire history of Christianity. That *one short* phrase has been a source of both beneficial goodness and painful mischief. Fortunately, everything we need to maintain the blessings planted in this phrase and forgive the missteps it has inspired are right here in our Scripture.

First, we have to hear Matthew's Risen Christ saying: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given *to me*." Not to the disciples, not to the church, not to those who have been ordained or even to those who have been baptized. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ.

For Matthew, Jesus was the new Moses. Matthew's Jesus embodied Torah, the instruction revealed to Moses that God gave him to teach us the truth about God. Jesus *does not replace* the instruction God gave Moses. For Matthew, the Risen Christ *is* the teaching – and *that's* the authority God has granted.

Now, the author of Matthew's Gospel wrote Greek and wrote it well. And there is something that we have let become hidden in the English phrase: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...." What Matthew's careful choice of words actually says is something more like: "As you go, *disciple* all the Gentiles."

As you are out and about, Jesus says, *disciple* all the people who are not like you. It's a verb, not a noun; an action, not a result. To *disciple* people is to contemplate and live what Jesus taught, and then to interact with people who do not yet see themselves as children of

God so that they experience something of God's light and of goodness. To disciple is to interact with people who are in different circumstances so that they receive something of God's mercy and of compassion, a taste of God's justice or reconciliation. To disciple is to interact with people in ways that allow them to discover God's hope and wonder and light in their own way, without imposing our own cultural traditions in the process.

This may have seemed an already unreasonable task to the 11 astonished people still reeling from the crucifixion and rubbing their eyes at the sight of their resurrected friend and teacher. But then, as if that weren't daunting enough, Jesus told this stunned little cluster to teach the world how to be in relationship with God. For this fragmented group, continuing on must have seemed absurd. So few of them and such an intimidating responsibility. Think of it.

Now, some people refer to this passage as the Great Commission. I don't.

Framing the command Jesus gave in that way neglects those who, for reasons beyond their control, feel burdened beyond their strength. Even for those filled with enthusiasm and joy, the project that Jesus has handed them is preposterous. An effort that is hopelessly unattainable *unless*, that is, *unless* we reframe the emphasis.

Think of the last words that Matthew's Jesus speaks as something beyond a directive. Hear them instead as a final promise. Even on Trinity Sunday, these are the most important words in this passage: "Behold," the Risen Christ says. "Behold, I am with you all the days even to the completion of the age."

"*Behold*," not "remember." Remembering is mostly just calling a past event to one's mind. Beholding is opening ourselves fully and in humility to God, accepting and living into our shared nature with God. To behold is to notice the human participation in God's Divine outpouring upon the world. To behold, embrace and act on this truth in our lives, especially our lives together in community, is what perpetuates the presence of Jesus Christ.

As we disciple others, God plants curiosity in them, stimulates their hope and, through our actions, begins making them whole. When they are ready, we can listen to their stories, learn with them, and guide and welcome them into the body of Christ in baptism.

We don't make disciples, God does. God draws them to Godself by the presence of the Risen Christ in a community. People watch to see who gets included in that community and who does not, who is lifted up and who is ignored, who is strengthened and who is diminished. The more we disciple, the more God breathes out the Holy Spirit through us into each other and into the people that we serve.

That's how we participate in God's work of making the realm of God's heaven just a bit more real. The Trinity inspires contemplation into action, and nurtures the heart of authentic holy relationships. Someday, we'll talk more about the Trinity and maybe even explore some of the various and evolving teachings about the One Holy and Undivided Trinity that we call Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But on this Trinity Sunday, I would invite you just to behold, to drink in, the promise that Christ is with us. Not only in the future, but now and on all our days; days when we are confident of God's presence and days when we wonder if God even exists, let alone cares. Days when we flow with gratitude and days when we grow impatient with waiting. Days when we radiate joy and happiness, and days when we wonder why we should bother getting out of bed.

Christ is here with us on all our days with whatever is on our hearts. Encouraging, comforting and challenging; guiding, prompting and listening, but always pouring out grace and peace. On this Trinity Sunday, whether it is joyful or painful to do today, behold, *take into* yourself the final promise that Matthew's Jesus made with no qualifiers, no restrictions, no exceptions: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." Right here, right now and forever.

Silence and stillness

The Nicene Creed

Leader: Let us reaffirm our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he (or "she" or no pronoun) is worshiped and glorified.
He (she/who) has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need

These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:

Leader: God the Father, your will for all people is health and salvation.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Son, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico, the Most Reverend Francisco Moreno, Presiding Bishop of La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico & Bishop of Northern Mexico.

In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for Grace, Bainbridge Island; St. Barnabas, Bainbridge Island; St. Antony of Egypt, Silverdale.

We pray for our neighbors at Navos, for Neighborhood House, for Hospitality House, for Operation Nightwatch, and for the safety of those in military service, for the safety and stamina of healthcare workers, for first responders, and for their families. We pray for those on our long-term list. Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, offered silently or aloud.

Leader: Lord, grant your healing grace to all who are sick, injured or disabled, that they may be made whole.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who are lonely, anxious or depressed, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who minister to those who are suffering wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Mend broken relationships, and restore to those in distress soundness of mind and serenity of spirit.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Sustain and support those who seek your guidance and lift up all who are brought low by the trials of this life.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to the dying peace and a holy death, especially Deacon Richard Buhrer, and uphold by the grace and consolation of your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: You are the LORD who does mighty wonders.

All: You have declared your power among the peoples.

Leader: With you, LORD, is the well of life

All: and in your light do we see light.

Leader: Hear us, LORD of life:

All: heal us, and make us whole.

Let us pray.

A period of silence follows, and then, Leader: Hear the prayer we offer for all your people.

Remember in your mercy those for whom we pray: heal the sick, raise the fallen, strengthen the fainthearted, protect those who serve, and enfold in your love the fearful and those who have no hope.

In the fullness of time complete your gracious work. Reconcile all things in Christ and make them new, that we may be restored in your image, renewed in your love, and serve you as sons and daughters in your kingdom.

Through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ, our LORD, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our voices of thanks and praise:

All: Blessed be God, our strength and our salvation, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Leader: Let us confess our sins to God. *Silence may be kept and then all together:*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father:

We have sinned against you,

through our own fault,

in thought, and word, and deed,

and in what we have left undone.

For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,

forgive us all our offenses;

and grant that we may serve you

in newness of life,

to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Leader: May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Pater Noster/Our Father/The Lord's Prayer

Please feel free to use the translation and language that most feeds your heart.

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.

Prayer of spiritual communion

Most Holy Christ, we trust that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

We love you above all things, and we long for you in our souls. Since we cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We embrace you as though you were already there and we unite ourselves entirely to you. Never permit us to be separated from you. *Amen.*

Concluding Prayer

Holy, holy, holy – let angels cry who see and know you face to face.

Blessed are you, maker of all from nothing;

Blessed are you, savior of all from sin;

Blessed are you, spirit of all, in all, and through all.

Blessed are you, God alone, yet God in community.

Bless, O God, your Church on earth with the harmony and diversity of heaven, that we may be one, as you are one. Amen.

Blessing

Make the sign of the cross as you say: May God the Holy Trinity make us strong in faith and love, defend us on every side, and guide us in truth and peace; and the blessing of God (+), Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among us and remain us this day and for ever. Amen.

Giving Thanks at Table

Giving God,

bless all who have gathered round this table.

May we know the fullness of your presence

at every meal and in all our sharing.

Amen.



“The Trinity and Incarnation are, for us, since the coming of Jesus, one Mystery. Trinity and Incarnation and our baptism and the Sign of the Cross in the names of the three Persons – all are one Mystery. This, I think, is the great meaning – or one face of it – of that sign of the Cross that we solemnly make at the beginning of every major religious action in order to invoke the Mystery.”

~ **Fr. Bruno Barnhart, OSB Cam.**

Sources and references:

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