

GOSPEL READING Matthew 28.16-end

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

So today is Trinity Sunday.

We've just had all the excitement of Easter, and Ascension, and the fire and wind and speaking in tongues of Pentecost. And then the next Sunday, today, seems to be a bit dull. The Trinity is really important if you want to understand the church. But, on the face of it, a Sunday all about teaching, about a doctrine sounds, yes, a bit dull. The best bit of the Trinity Sunday service each year sometimes seems to be when we sing "Holy, holy, holy" – absolutely one of the best hymns ever written.



But here's the thing. Actually, the Trinity is really important, and quite difficult, and very mysterious. So it definitely is worth trying to get our heads around it today.

Do you remember the words that started our service today? We usually start each service like this:

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

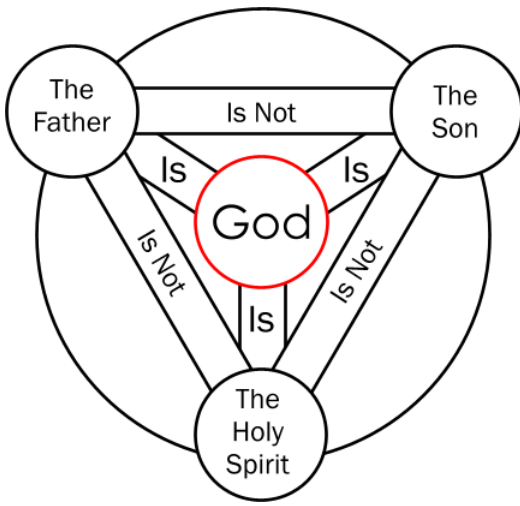
And right at the end of the service, the blessing for all of us ends like this:

and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

We 'top and tail', begin and end the service with these words. At the beginning we are asking God, the Trinity, to bless what we are about to do. At the end we're asking the Trinity to bless us as we leave church and go out into the world.

But what is the Trinity?



Here's a graphic to help us.

However, that is a bit dull, too – it does explain that God is Three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and at the same time one God; but it looks a bit more like some maths homework than the beautiful, mysterious, wonderful God. Do we have a better picture of how God is Three, and God is One?



This is better! A picture that shows 3 leaves, or 3 sections, all joined together and interwoven, with a circle running through them. This is a Celtic knot, an Irish symbol for the Trinity, and it's a bit like the leaf, the shamrock.



That's a really beautiful picture of a shamrock leaf. Because the shamrock is also like a three in one. It is one leaf, and yet it is three leaves joined together. Perhaps we can even draw it like this:





Another way of looking at God being three different beings and yet one being, is to think about water. Water is water: but if you put water on to boil, it becomes steam. Then if you put water into the freezer, or outside on a cold Norwegian day, it turns into ice!

Water can exist in 3 different ways, but it's still water, it's still H₂O. Just so - God is the Father – but still God; God is the Son – but still God; and God is the Holy Spirit – but still God. And God is all joined up together, into this amazing mystery.

Just one more image. Talking about water, or shamrocks, or even about eggs, which are also three things in one (shell, white and yolk) make God sound a bit like a thing, an object. But God is always alive and always active, always loving you and me. And the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work together in this. They are like a team:



I expect some of you will have guessed – this is the Norwegian football team. A team, again, is one thing – but made up of lots of people working together. I tried to think of a sport that has three people on a team, but couldn't think of one!



Anyway, before we begin to think of God as something too small and too trivial, like a football team, let us remind ourselves that the God is also Creator, making the the whole of the universe. God is Saviour and Healer, making all of us whole and holy; and God is Spirit and Inspiration, making us all alive with faith, helping us to pray and to love each other.

This is one of the best loved pictures of the Trinity. This is an icon (but not like digital icons), and it's one of the most famous of all of them. The original was painted about 700 years ago by Andrei Rublev. He was a monk in Russia. This icon is called "The Hospitality of Abraham", because it is based on the story in Genesis 18 about three mysterious figures who visit Abraham and Sarah to tell them that they are going to have a baby. But more often it is called "The Trinity." These are the Three Persons of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit on the right, the Son in the middle, and the Father on the left.

That is just to remind us that God is much greater, much more mysterious, much more loving and endless than we can begin to explain in just one address. But for all the wonderful young people – in fact, for all the wonderful people of all ages – at St Edmund's, one last thought. Exploring who God is and getting to know God is the most exciting and valuable thing you will ever do. May you be blessed in your walk with God and into God.

AMEN.

[For those who would like to know more about the icon, there is an excellent explanation here:
<https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/17509/documents/2017/8/Trinityicon.pdf>]

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**

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 40.12-17, 27-end

¹²Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? ¹³Who has directed the spirit of the Lord, or as his counsellor has instructed him? ¹⁴Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice? Who taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? ¹⁵Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales; see, he takes up the isles like fine dust. ¹⁶Lebanon would not provide fuel enough, nor are its animals enough for a burnt-offering. ¹⁷All the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. ²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God'? ²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;³¹but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Psalm 8

- 1 O Lord our *governor*, •
how glorious is your name in all the world!
- 2 Your majesty above the heavens is *praised* •
out of the mouths of babes at the breast.
- 3 You have founded a stronghold against your *foes*, •
that you might still the enemy and the avenger.
- 4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your *fingers*, •
the moon and the stars that you have ordained,
- 5 What is man, that you should be mindful of *him*; •
the son of man, that you should seek him out?
- 6 You have made him little lower than the *angels* •
and crown him with glory and honour.
- 7 You have given him dominion over the works of your *hands* •
and put all things under his feet,
- 8 All sheep and *oxen*, •
even the wild beasts of the field,
- 9 The birds of the air, the fish of the *sea* •
and whatsoever moves in the paths of the sea.
- 10 O Lord our *governor*, •
how glorious is your name in all the world!

NEW TESTAMENT READING: 2 Corinthians 13.11-end

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. ¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. ¹³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.