

TRINITY SUNDAY 2025 All Souls' **GIVING LIFE TO DOCTRINE** dtw

Today we have prayed to God the Father, giving praise that through God's Word and Holy Spirit, God has revealed salvation in all the world through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Today is Trinity Sunday.

Some skeptics and sectarians; even dare I say, liberal Christians, have criticised the doctrine of the Trinity saying that it is either non-biblical, or not logical or not relevant to thinking people today. The word 'Trinity' certainly isn't biblical, but the doctrine crystalises and formalises the teaching and revelation contained in the Bible, as do other doctrines. It also preserves this orthodox belief intact down the centuries of the Christian religion.

With children, I like to use pictures and illustrations, like the apple (peel, flesh, seeds), to explain the more mathematical side of things. Water, steam and ice; the sun, heat and light also works; but none of these comes close to the mystery and the complexity of the three-fold divine life. The doctrine itself came together in substance in the fourth century at the Council of Nicea and we are reciting the Nicene Creed today which is a consequence of the hard work of that Council. It was called together in 325 in response to the heresy of Arianism which effectively claimed that Jesus was neither fully God nor fully human. This was not the experience of the church; neither was it the witness of Scripture. Furthermore, this heresy was in danger of reducing Jesus to a demigod, along with the Holy Spirit, which could lead to a collection of divinities. Yet the church stood firm in its claim to the experience and revelation of one God which it inherited from Judaism.

Well, that was the fourth century, using fourth century philosophy, metaphors and imagery. What about the twenty-first century? Is it true, as some would argue, that this doctrine appears to be devoid of life, experience and meaning for us? Happily we will find that the key to understanding the Trinity and indeed other doctrines too, is our very lives, our own experience. God is found in the here and now; in life itself – not in a dry, doctrinal formula, nor in a creed. It is one thing to say, "We believe in one God..."; it is another thing to fall into the arms of the living God, Creator, Redeemer and Life-giver, experiencing the fullness of divine Love. For this reason the simplest person who cannot *reason* about the Trinity may *know* the Trinity more intimately than some great theologian who has it all in the head but not in the heart. Maybe this is why some people find the Creeds a bit hard to take, because they don't simply want to mouth intellectual assent; they want to stand on holy ground in adoration!

God is the God of our environment, our history, our relationships, our political, social and economic life and of our worship. Nothing exists which is apart from God; God is apart from nothing. God is in the midst; the one whom we proclaim and celebrate once more today is in the midst of our suffering, our disease, our hopes, our joys, our achievements, our failures our recreation, our life and our death. This is the God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit of our hearts, our silent depths, our future and our eternal home.

Firstly, God is revealed as Creator and Sustainer of Life, our Father and our Mother, whose love is personal for all creation, including you and me. The whole of life is grounded in the Father's love. This is the absolute core of the teaching of Jesus. "Consider the lilies of the field..." But for the Christian, Jesus does not simply point away from himself to this fatherly-motherly reality of love; he *embodies* it himself. This is done in terms of flesh and blood, *our* flesh and blood. This is the second divine manifestation: the incarnation of divine love, born of Mary, dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. His real presence is revealed today once more in the breaking of the bread. In Jesus we see God exposed, God in action, reconciling the world to God and entrusting to each one of us the same ministry of reconciliation. But wait, there's more! In the communion (Gk *koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit the Christian is caught up in a contagious life and power that goes way beyond anything that mere mortals can deliver. Pentecost, which we celebrated last Sunday, ignited an impoverished small community of disciples and grew them into a Church of some two billion world-wide believers today.

So look around; notice mother earth in which you live and dwell; feel God's hand in it all, the air, soil, sea and sky, a flower, your life. Next time you go for a walk, pick up a leaf or a shell or a gum nut and meditate upon it; notice the intimacy and intricacy in its making; be still and know the Maker. Then feel the presence of Jesus walking beside you, as close as breathing. Have a conversation. Tell him how your day's going. Like a very close friend, Jesus wants to know. Then take a deep breath and fill your lungs with the Spirit of God; the Spirit who is Life-giver, the Spirit of grace, truth and love, the Comforter. Indeed, take some comfort and find rest for your soul.

Our God is a dynamic, life-giving presence; not a doctrine set in creedal concrete. The Westminster Confession states that the true end of our humanity is to worship God and enjoy God forever.

O worship our all-creating, redeeming, sanctifying God in the beauty of triune holiness! Amen.