



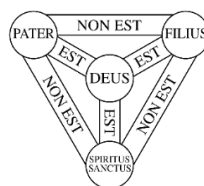
(Image: 'A Trinity?' Marc Chagall)

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

Many times those of us preaching might actually use that phrase as a preface to a sermon. I tend not to – but today I'll use it – not as a preface but as a proper opening part of the text. The very concept of Trinity can be a challenge to us to understand, and yet it's a very integral part of the creeds that we recite. So "I believe in One God"... we go on to list the three persons in the One God.

Trinity Sunday, as a point in the year when we celebrate the Holy Trinity is interesting from a service planning perspective. Although the lectionary gives us some readings to use (for those that don't know, the lectionary is a book – these days as far as I am concerned more commonly an app – that gives us the readings from the Bible appointed for a particular day) we're challenged because there is not a single event in the Bible that you can say "This is the point where the Trinity is revealed". Not all Christian churches either agree with the Trinitarian doctrine, although most do.

I've listened to a few sermons over time which have sought to paint a picture of the Trinity in a way that we can understand and I've tried myself in family worship a couple of times, usually with a tripod representing something that is stable. It's interesting actually from above how my camera tripod looks like "The Shield of the Trinity" – which is sometimes used to represent the Trinity as a diagram. Wikipedia has a reasonably clear article about that [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shield\\_of\\_the\\_Trinity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shield_of_the_Trinity)



However, instead of an academic perspective on the Trinity, I want to explore a little more of what the Trinity has meant to me.

Many of you will have heard about the death of our child Danny (formerly Stephanie) just a couple of months ago. As a parent, you naturally expect your children to survive you, although many of us have, I know also been in this position. We have felt the love and support of the community including many of you. For this, heartfelt thanks from both Rebecca and me. Stephanie was our third child, and I remember leading a family service sixteen years ago to the day as I write this, for Trinity Sunday, and at the time I was talking about things happening in threes; and that as an example. It bought a lump in my throat and more than a tear in my eye to read that in my own notes.

I was left wondering whether I would feel able to lead worship and to preach again.

I said to Nikki, sometime after Danny's funeral, that I thought that I should at least try – and I set myself a target of Trinity Sunday, and I'd see where I felt led for that day. Here we are...

I depart a bit from the Lectionary today, and actually I start right at the very beginning (a very good place to start, as Julie Andrews once famously sang). Well at least with the first book of Genesis – but actually the sixth day.

The NRSV translation (which you might not actually like, but I'll come to that) of Gen 1:26 reads 'Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'"

Some of us might feel that language is a little clumsy – many of us would have learned a different translation. But from my perspective, and for those that know us and knew Danny / Stephanie, well, we've been tripping over pronouns and definitions for a while, so I'm going to stick with that.

Jesus (God the Son) came to earth and walked on earth with us. He touched many people's lives – with the last few years of his life on earth being well documented in the Gospels. Yet those who knew Jesus by and large were simple men, and Jesus's direct ministry was confined to a relatively small geographical area. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit (promised by Jesus as he was preparing to leave the Apostles) that provided the power. The Holy Spirit as God with us working alongside us and through us.

It is that Holy Spirit that I feel has helped me to take this on.

And yet, this is a reflection not for Pentecost, but for Trinity Sunday. Why? You may well ask.

I think this comes right back to Genesis. Humankind. Made in God's image. Humankind, supported by the God in the Holy Spirit doing the work of God. Jesus, God the Son, gave us examples. But we see any person, and there is God in that person, and God with that person, and we see God. God looks like that person, and God looks like us. I may not look like my brother or sister, yet we all look like God, and there is God with us all, and there is God in us all.

I think that is very relevant when we listen to the news and feel the hurt through the ways of injustice.

We have all lived through difficult times over the last few weeks. I have felt that One God supporting us. In many ways these trying times have brought out the best of people, where so many have followed the exhortation and have been loving their neighbours as themselves. Supporting each other in this Global Village, and our Local Villages.

Now, those that have heard me preach will know that I normally try to inject a little humour into most of what I might say. Whether it's an attempt (possibly misguided) to get some of a message to stick, I don't know... but here goes. Jesus was, of course, famously asked "who is my neighbour" and told the parable of the Good Samaritan in reply. Since we have mostly been locked down many of us have had a little more time, and if we have been out and about (normally on foot) in the villages

we might have spent time to talk with people. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, of course, the neighbour was the Samaritan, who did not cross and pass by on the other side of the street. Yet now, to be good neighbours, we DO make sure that we pass on the other side of the street. But we have stopped and taken the opportunity to talk.

Drawing this all together, a critical part of how we honour our one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is how we honour those of the image of God, our fellow members of humankind, whether they look like us, act like us or think like us.

Finally, it's always nice to see some of my thinking backed up by some theology. St. Augustine (to whom, of course, the Church at Burrough Green is dedicated) considered the Trinity doctrine in the way that humans, created in the divine image took on their personalities and loved their neighbours.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – Amen!

### **Worship Songs**

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeGZH-rQF5I>

Ancient Words will guide us home: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vmTkXNpwzs>

The Lord Bless you and keep you: Virtual Choir by Batavia Madrigal Singers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akt32E83zjl>

### **Prayers**

Loving Trinity of God,  
We praise you and place into your hands all who we love, care and worry for. Bring healing, comfort, love, unity and peace we pray. **Amen**

God of love,  
You see and share in the hurt and injustices of the world.  
We pray for change, for justice and equality everywhere.  
Inspire good leadership, that will always seek higher values and work for peace.  
Help us to work together for a world where each is valued and respected.  
In humility we ask for insight to face our own prejudice and biases.  
Transform our hearts, so we may value and celebrate one another as you do.

**Amen.**

*We take a moment to lift the prayers of our own hearts before God...*

*Joining all our prayers together we say the Inclusive Lord's Prayer (New Zealand Prayer Book):*

**Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-Maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver  
Source of all that is and all that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God who is in heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!  
The way of your justice be followed by people of the world!  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!**

**Your commonwealth of peace and freedom  
sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With bread we need for today, feed us.**

**In the hurts we absorb from one another forgive us.**

**In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.**

**From trials too great to endure, spare us.**

**From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.**

**May it be so. Amen.**

Go in peace to love one another and serve the Lord: **Amen**