

Dean's Letter, 27 May 2018

Dear Cathedral family

So today is Trinity Sunday! It is the one single Sunday of the church year that is NOT centred on an act of God in creation or salvation. For six months each year, Sunday by Sunday, we focus on what God has done in creating the world, in saving it through his Son Jesus Christ, in empowering and transforming us by the Holy Spirit. This "creation and salvation cycle" leads us from Advent, through to Christmas and the Epiphany, to Ash Wednesday and Lent, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension, and the Day of Pentecost (last Sunday).

And we also focus, Sunday by Sunday, for the remaining six months of the year, on the Lord's call to us to be faithful disciples. So the Bible readings for these Sundays give us the clear theme and focus of salvation or discipleship – but not on Trinity Sunday!

Today we are given the opportunity to ponder deeply on the mystery that is God. One God, Three Persons. The mystery and nature of God as revealed to us in the doctrine of the Trinity. A colleague put it like this, a few weeks ago (writing just after Ascension Day):

"We are seeking to upsize and upscale our vision of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Last Sunday was big with a focus on the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we go from big to bigger as we remember and celebrate Pentecost this Sunday. Words are often inadequate when talking about God. The following Sunday is Trinity Sunday and words will definitely fail us as we try to understand, grasp and explain the concept of a Triune God."

When we speak of the Trinity, we are fumbling for words, concepts, images, and we quickly hit the boundaries, the glass ceiling, of understanding. Theologians have done their best over the centuries. The Nicene Creed is an important part of this, putting into words how we understand the person of Christ: "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..." (AAPB pg 108).

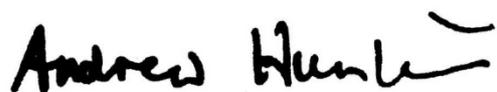
Another attempt is in the SAPB, the Creed of St Athanasius (SAPB pg 21), which begins as follows:

"Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic [i.e. Christian, universal] faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance...."

The SAPB practice required the church to say this Creed on Trinity Sunday; and on the Feast days of the Apostles. These days, following the AAPB, we say the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed.

What does all this mean? We are called to live holy lives of love and self-offering, lives of worship and service – and I hope that you were able to read or listen to the sermon by Bishop Michael Currey (the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, USA). But what we believe, is important. The Trinity is at the heart of our understanding of God. Perhaps the Trinity is to be prayed, not preached.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.