

Readings for Trinity Sunday

31st May 2026

First Reading: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the 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, the first day. And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 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.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the

earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Brothers and sisters, 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.

Gospel: St Matthew 26:16-20

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

A Reflection for Trinity Sunday

There is a story that a former Bishop of Edinburgh once advised his clergy not to try to ‘eff’ the ineffable. Something ineffable is too overwhelming, too sacred or beautiful to be expressed in words, it is beyond words. The ‘ineffable’ he was referring to was, of course, God.

Each year, when we reach Trinity Sunday, there is a temptation for those who preach to try to do this, to try to explain the, at least to us, inexplicable, usually falling for some heresy as we do so. We believe in God who is unity in trinity, one God in three persons, and our finite minds struggle to comprehend how that can be possible. There has to be space in our faith for mystery where God is concerned, and when we try to use simplistic analogies, we are trying to reduce God to our own level. And a god that can be reduced to our own level of understanding is probably not worth worshipping.

Instead, on this Trinity Sunday, let us take the opportunity to celebrate what we do know and understand of our Trinitarian God, often referred to as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but also as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, and, as I recently discovered in the New Zealand Prayer Book, earth-maker, pain-bearer, life-giver. I rather like that last one.

I’d like to focus on the first reading today, in which we have one the creation myths from Genesis. ‘Myth’, in the sense that I am using here, is a sacred story that explains the world and human experience, telling us truth,

symbolically and metaphorically, without necessarily being literally true. So creation myths explain origins of world in God without having to take factors like the order of events or the timeline literally. This story has much to teach us about God as Trinity and I'd like to touch on some of it today.

The opening verse tells us that creation begins with God, that first element of the Trinity, God as creator or indeed, earth-giver, for that is what came about. But we also know that the other persons of the Trinity were present at creation.

Last week, in his reflection for our newsletter, Ven. John Green reminded us of the start of John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' And then, slightly later, as he also reminded us, 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.' That second person of the Trinity, God the Son or God the redeemer, or God the pain-bearer, and who later became human and lived among us, was present 'in the beginning' before creation began.

And the Holy Spirit, the sustainer or the life-giver, was also present before creation. The second verse tells us, 'the wind from God swept over the face of the waters', the word translated as 'wind' could also be translated as 'breath' or 'spirit'.

That the whole Trinity was present at creation reminds me that, while we may split God into different entities or roles, this creative aspect of God still required the whole Trinity to be present. The Trinity is not divisible, it is also a unity.

And God started to bring order from chaos. As a scientist, I love this. If you have ever studied thermodynamics, you may have come across concept of entropy or the tendency to spontaneous disorder. In simple terms, although other factors can counter entropy, natural systems have a tendency to disorder. And taking the risk of a very simple analogy, a tower of Jenga bricks is an organised structure which all too easily falls to total disorder. The converse, a pile of bricks that organises itself into a tower isn't something that happens spontaneously, and only occurs through the efforts of an outside force – someone building the tower.

From the chaos, from the disorder of a dark, formless void, God brought order and beauty. Creation is diverse beyond our imagining. There was light and darkness, different sources of light, creatures and plants of all kinds – some of which are very strange indeed to our eyes. God then told them to be fruitful and multiply, creating yet more diversity. And some of God's creatures also became creators, explorers, and discoverers themselves leading to even more diversity. And yet, amongst this diversity, there is a very precise order. Life on this planet of ours is only possible because of some very precisely aligned laws of physics which make all of creation inter-dependent. And, unfortunately, we are starting to see only too clearly, what happens when the balance of created systems is upset beyond its God-given capacity for re-alignment.

Furthermore, as part of this created diversity, we are told that God also created humankind in God's own image. So, we are all made in God's image and yet, unless you happen to have an identical twin, we are all different. (And even if you do have identical siblings, you may argue that you are still different.) This diversity of creation reminds me that while the Trinity is also a unity, its unity does not mean sameness or uniformity. The unity of the Trinity, whom we worship, is also diverse, and creation, in all its diversity, is a reflection of God's nature.

At different stages in our lives, or even at different times of day or week, we may find that we relate more closely to different persons of this Trinitarian God.

Sometimes, we may feel closest to the creator, the earth-maker, as we revel in the beauty of the created world, maybe as we basked in the warmth of the sunshine this week, or perhaps even took a swim in the sea and felt the invigorating waves wash over us. There are times when we can feel embraced by creation, feeling its life-force, rejoicing in being part of its community. And there are times when the world can seem a fearful place and we might cry out to one who brings order from chaos, the one who protects us.

At other times, we may feel closest to the redeemer or pain-bearer, Jesus our sibling who walked this world and knows the reality of human nature. The one who knows what it is to cry, to laugh, to get angry, to be cold, dirty and tired. The one we can turn to for unconditional love when we feel let down or betrayed, or when we feel we have done those things to others.

At yet other times it may be the sustainer, the life-giving Holy Spirit, who fills our being. That mysterious force that burned in the disciples at Pentecost and burns in God's people today, guiding us on our path, giving us energy to keep going when we feel like quitting, giving us courage when our hearts fail us, making us laugh with joy at the simple pleasures of life, and rejoicing with us when we achieve the seemingly impossible.

Earth-maker, pain-bearer, life-giver.

We may not have a neat explanation of how the persons of the Trinity relate to each other, but we experience all these manifestations of their presence and activity in our lives, and we celebrate that today on Trinity Sunday.