

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

# VIRAL BULLETIN

7 June 2020

Trinity Sunday

Welcome to the *Viral Bulletin* for Trinity Sunday.

*Please forward this to anyone you know who might not be in our Google group.*

For links to information and worship during the coronavirus restrictions  
please visit: [www.northburychurches.org.uk](http://www.northburychurches.org.uk)



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**'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'**

# Trinity Sunday 2020

TODAY'S COLLECT SAYS we are given 'a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity'. It's with a sense of wonder and awe that we approach the Godhead, which is surely more important than hunting for rational explanation, that must always be inadequate.

Once again we have followed the Church's calendar marking the story of the earthly life of Jesus from his birth to his death, Resurrection and Ascension, to reach the Pentecostal outflow of the Holy Spirit. But now we come to an element of faith that's not in the Bible at all, though we're now celebrating it on Trinity Sunday. This year we cannot be together singing 'Three in One and One in Three' but we still need to appreciate this multi-faceted view of God.

Why the Trinity? For Jews and Muslims the one Creator God has always been enough, though in the Old Testament our common ancestor Abraham was visited by that strange party of three promising him an heir. Rublev's famous icon depicts them. Early arguments in the Church (very long and complex) were based on the nature of Jesus Christ and how he could be divine. You may recall how he was only seen as a great prophet - until the Resurrection. News of this, followed by the extraordinary (promised) outpouring on his disciples at Pentecost, produced great missionary activity, in turn resulting in the letters of Paul and the written Gospels. It is Paul who gives that precursor sentence: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.' We don't know when the formula in Christian baptism changed from 'In the name of Jesus' to 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit', but the authority for it is shown at the very end of Matthew's Gospel (if perhaps added later).



Possibly more difficult, even than accepting the divinity of Christ, is the distinguishing between God who is spirit and the Holy Spirit of God. Perhaps the 'Spirit of God' was imagined as a kind of bridge between the unreachable, fatally

powerful God and vulnerable earthly beings. The Holy Spirit certainly evokes movement, dynamic action, rather than a static presence.

I've often thought of that delightful moment in the TV series 'Rev' some years ago, when the troubled East End vicar confides his problems to his friend the Muslim Imam. The Imam kindly suggests 'Why don't you pray to one of your three Gods? He might be able to help you'.

Many of us will recall being taught about St. Patrick and the clover leaf. Various other images have been used to show single identity with distinct forms, such as water, ice and steam, or the sun with rays of light and heat. There's also carbon (very topical) in coal, soot - and diamond. I always like Dorothy L. Sayers' version in her remarkable little book 'The Mind of the Maker'. She compares the action of the Trinity with the production of a book. To summarise:

The idea, the concept of what the book is about, will contain, and the wish for it, is like the thought of God the Creator; it is brought into being from nothing. The actual writing of the book, giving it a developing substance, with beginning, middle and end, is like the task and work of God the Redeemer; without his vital action the story could not be fully played out. When the book is tangibly in existence, published and freely available, its effect on all who read it is like the effect of God the Sustainer, reaching and penetrating far and wide, with the capacity for great and deep influence, all being achieved with purpose and oversight. Yet this metaphor of the Trinity is still limited.

We may be reading a lot of books in lockdown, but the Holy Trinity may still seem far away and beyond our understanding. We should recall that we come closest to God through love. God is love, and the Spirit is breath, and we've been reminded this last week (by tragedy) how vital breathing is for us. The poetic vision of St. John of the Cross described the Trinity as three voices entwined in love, the first needing the other, the beloved, and the movement between them being the third.

This brings us back to the sense of wonder and awe, with a longing to belong. In these days of new anxiety and over-readiness to blame, people also need to look for glimpses of glory, entwined with love and beauty; these are not 'distanced' or limited in this world or beyond. Thanks be, eternally, to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Marianne Atkinson*

**'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'**

# HAVE YOUR SAY!

## Coronavirus, Church & You Survey

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UNIVERSITY

The Covid-19 pandemic has obviously had a profound effect on churches. The lockdown has severely restricted ministry in areas such as pastoral care, fellowship groups, and serving the community. On the other hand, for those with online access, worship has taken on new and creative forms over the last few weeks. Many clergy and ministry teams have risen to the challenge of operating in the virtual environment.

As we pass the most severe period of lockdown, it seems a good time to assess how churchgoers have responded to the experience, and what they think the future might hold. How well have people coped with the pandemic? Has it strengthened or weakened their faith? How has it been for clergy and ministry teams trying to work in this new environment? How have those receiving ministry found this novel experience? Will virtual ministry become part of the post-pandemic landscape, and will this be a good move for your church?

We have developed a survey over the last few weeks in discussion with bishops, clergy and lay people which we hope will enable you to record your experience of the pandemic, the ministry you have given or received, and what you think will happen to churches in a post-pandemic world. In an article to launch the survey in the *Church Times*, the Bishop of Manchester, David Walker, wrote: "This survey is an attempt to go beyond anecdote... It will capture evidence of both excitement and fears for the future, of where stress levels have changed, and whether personal faith has weakened or grown."

The initial response has been very encouraging, with about 5,000 people taking part in the first two weeks. We are keen to add to that number so we can ensure we gather the views of a wide spectrum of people while the lockdown restrictions continue to affect church life. This is an online survey, which we estimate it will take you about 20-30 minutes to complete. Most of the questions simply require you to tick boxes, though there are options to specify your particular circumstances, and an opportunity at the end for you to tell us your views in your own words. Alongside questions about the pandemic and ministry there are sections which ask about you: these are important because they will allow us to see how the lockdown is affecting different sorts of people in different contexts.

The survey can be completed on mobile phones, though it is more quickly completed on devices with larger screens such as tablets or computers.

You can access it using the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yqsq9fy2>

Please forward this link to any churches or churchgoers you feel might want to take part in the survey and support this research. We should have some initial results within a few weeks and will make these available as widely as we can.

The Revd Professor Andrew Village  
York St John University [a.village@yorks.j.ac.uk](mailto:a.village@yorks.j.ac.uk)

The Revd Canon Professor Leslie J. Francis  
Visiting Professor York St John University

# June 1888

*Michael Phillips has kindly provided us with another nineteenth century parish magazine article from the archives of St John's, Bury St Edmunds.*



The Church was beautifully decorated for Whitsun Day, special attention of course being given to make the altar and font bright with flowers; the pulpit, lectern fald stool and choir stalls were also lavishly decked. At Evensong the altar was bright with light; following the very ancient custom alluded to by St. Jerome, who lived from A.D.345 to A.D.420, "lights were lit round about the altar in festal seasons as a sign of spiritual joy". After the Evensong Service on Trinity Sunday an organ recital was given by Mr. O. Clark; during which the solo "It is enough." from Mendelssohn's Elijah, was most effectively rendered by Mr. J. C. Roberts, who has recently joined the choir. The late improvements in our organ, which were well brought out by our organist, only made us long more than ever, that the fine instrument may, ere very long, be still further improved by the completion of the Great Organ.

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## Corpus Christi

On Thursday we celebrate Corpus Christi, or to give the Common Worship title in full, the **Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion**. This subject has always been a subject for hot debate, for angry disagreement and for passion amongst Christians. That's how important it is for us.

Think of how the very names we use for the sacrament: Eucharist - Mass - Lord's Supper - Holy Communion - often say as much about what we think it's *not* as what we think it is. Sadly, we can make it a negative statement rather than a positive one. But let's look at these names positively and then see what they have to say to us.

### **Firstly - The Lord's Supper**

This reminds us that what we do in this, the central act of Christian worship, is a continuation of what Jesus did in his earthly ministry. Time and time again in the gospels we hear of Jesus using a meal as an acted-out parable of his work in the world. He becomes the living bread as he shares his table with outcasts and sinners.

Jesus built upon the great importance of table fellowship in Jewish tradition. And as he built upon it he radically challenged it: incurring the wrath of the respectably religious for eating with tax-collectors and prostitutes, or being open to the multitude and the disreputable.

The Last Supper itself - the Lord's Supper if ever there was one - is strongly associated with the Jewish Passover meal, the celebration of the Exodus from Egypt. Do this in remembrance of me, says Jesus, and recognise that in me and what I do lies *your* Exodus. Your Exodus from everything that holds you back from being what you could be. Do this - eat with me - and find that this meal is of me and mine.

### **Secondly - Holy Communion**

William Temple said: 'The reality of our communion with Christ, and in him with one another, is the increase of love in our hearts.' This great sacrament grants us the opportunity, time and time again, in common with the whole church throughout the world, of being in touch with that which is wholly other, wholly different, utterly beyond our imaginings. In touch, that is, with the eternal God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all things. A God that is quite outside all our conceptions, quite unlike anything our minds can conceive. If I can think of it - it's not God. It's something I've thought of. God is bigger than the biggest thing I can think of. God is smaller than the smallest thing I can think of. God is not anything I can think of at all.

And yet, and yet, this God, through Jesus, becomes human and identifies with us. He reaches out and shares his table with us. He hands us the simple forms of bread and wine and says 'I am here.' He says to each one of us: 'Come close, I am here. I am with you. Take me, I am yours.'

God's availability and vulnerability is that of the tenderest lover. God's love for us is so great that his openness and vulnerability is total. To each one of us the love of God says: 'Take, eat, this is my body, given for you.' Here is my infinite love, given for you. Here I am, given for you. Love me too, I am given for you. For indeed: 'The reality of our communion with Christ, and in him with one another, is the increase of love in our hearts.'

### **Thirdly - there is the Mass**

This evokes the idea of sacrifice. People talk about 'the sacrifice of the Mass', and this is about God given for us. About God emptying himself. About Jesus giving up his life for his friends, making *us* his friends. Inviting *us* to take a seat at his banquet.

God lets go of divinity and takes on humanity, lets go of all power and domination and takes on all suffering. Here is our new Passover - redemption by powerlessness. Here is our new Passover meal, in appropriately humble form. In simple bread and wine, we encounter our broken God. He is the broken bread.

It is said that the word Mass itself comes from the Latin of dismissal at the end of the service. 'Ite, missa est.' Simply: 'Go, it is finished.' The word Mass tells us that this is not an end in itself. We come to church *and then* we go out, sent into the world.

As we are, we come. The good bits of us, the bad bits, the hopeful bits, the messy bits. We come in, close to our humble God. Our God who judges us by giving us, simply

placing before us, the sacrifice of his Son. Our God who says 'yes' to us by taking human form and living, and dying, a cruel unjust death. Our God who shows us that death is not an end, but a beginning. And then we go out again, fed with that new beginning and with that all-giving hopeful love. We go out to be ourselves in the world we have been given, to be truly ourselves.



*Celebrating Corpus Christi at St John's in 2017*

### **And so, fourthly - Eucharist**

This simply means 'thanksgiving' in Greek. So we make our Eucharist, our thanksgiving, our blessing of all that God has done for us. We give thanks for all that is, for all that we are and all that we have. Above all, we give thanks for the inexpressible gift of Jesus and all that means for us and for the world.

Thanksgiving is a constant theme in our life together. It must be our never-ending song. Jesus takes the bread, *gives thanks*, breaks it and gives it to them *and to us*: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' Give thanks in remembrance of me. Make Eucharist in remembrance of me. Make the Body of Christ in remembrance of me. Here it all comes together. Here is the keynote to the Christian way of life.

Lord's Supper, Mass, Holy Communion, Eucharist. A humble communal meal shared with the dispossessed. The glorious sacrifice of Christ. Intimate contact with the transcendent God. We give thanks, what else can we do?

We say 'yes' to all this and we celebrate every possible layer of meaning, and of course there are many more, in this great sacrament given to us by Our Lord himself. Yes: here is the Lamb of God. Yes: here is the whole Church. Yes: here is a fragile wafer of bread I can take, and feel, and taste, and swallow. We say 'Yes' to all of this, just as God, in Jesus his Son, says 'Yes' to us and to the world.

'Yes', this mundane bread and wine is all these things: the infinite glory of God, shown us in total humility and vulnerability; God present and nourishing us; God-with-us and loving us; God letting us in - and sending us out into his world.

*Adrian Mann*

# Pentecost Bags & Cake Plates at St George's

Val Gagen has thoughtfully distributed Pentecost Bags to all on the St George's Electoral Roll. The accompanying note says "this bag is to remind you of the **gifts of the Holy Spirit**, which are freely available to all of us" and explains the contents:

- a packet of love heart sweets, to remind us of **love**
- a smile sticker, to remind us of **joy**
- an olive branch (twig), to remind us of **peace**
- a piece of string, to remind us of **patience** (how long is a piece of string .....  
patience is harder when we don't know how long we have to wait)
- a plaster, to remind us of **kindness**
- a penny, to remind us of **generosity**
- a ring (sweet), to remind us of **faithfulness**
- a blanket (small piece of cloth), to remind us of **gentleness**
- and a button, to remind us of **self-control** (everyone needs a button  
in case of emergency!)

Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful people,  
and kindle in us the fire of your love. Amen



Wendy Stott and Maz Callaby have been delivering a 'cake plate' to the members of St George's congregation to let them know that they are not forgotten in these very strange times. They were all very responsibly handled - disposable plates, doilies etc - and social-distancing was carefully observed. Maz commented: "It was nice to see people face to face and they all are looking very well and much appreciated our efforts (I hope they taste good - no pressure there then). The enforced R&R has probably done us all good."



## Saint of the week

# Barnabas the Apostle

*This festival is usually kept on 11 June.  
This year it is transferred to 12 June because  
the festival of Corpus Christi falls on 11 June.*

WHO IS BARNABAS? We may wonder why he is called the 'Apostle' because he is not one of the Twelve chosen personally by Jesus to follow him. But in Acts 14.14 he is referred to as an apostle with Paul so he has been considered to be an apostle from the time of the early Church.

Barnabas does not appear in the Gospels but he is a significant figure and is frequently mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, especially in chapters 4-15, not least because of his association with Saul who was later known as Paul. He is believed to have been martyred in Salamis in the year 61.

Barnabas is an attractive figure. He introduced Saul to the other disciples (Acts 9.26-27) and seems to have worked with him for quite a while until they had a sharp disagreement and went their separate ways (Acts 15.36-41). Barnabas was a Jewish Cypriot and Levite, which means that he had a foot in both Greek and Jewish cultures. His name means 'son of consolation' or 'son of encouragement' and clearly he was respected by the other apostles. In the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15.1-35) he promoted the cause of Gentile Christians so that they did not have to follow Jewish practices.

So on this day perhaps we might like to reflect on how we can follow in the footsteps of Barnabas – and whether we are sons (or daughters!) of consolation and encouragement to others. This is especially important during this time of uncertainty. We are the church, the body of Christ. Like Barnabas, we are all called to extend Jesus' message of love and compassion to everyone. May the life and example of Barnabas inspire us as we all learn how to deal with the 'new normal' in the church and the world.

*Julia Mann*

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**DO YOU HAVE any photos of your church and people  
which you can submit as an email attachment?  
Items for the VIRAL BULLETIN are very welcome  
and can include photographs and illustrations.**

**They should be sent to Adrian Mann:**

**[adrian.mann@btinternet.com](mailto:adrian.mann@btinternet.com)**