

**OPENING COLLECT**

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity: keep us steadfast in this faith, that we may evermore be defended from all adversities; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 40.12-17, 27-31**

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? 13 Who has directed the spirit of the LORD, or as his counsellor has instructed him? 14 Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice? Who taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? 15 Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales; see, he takes up the isles like fine dust. 16 Lebanon would not provide fuel enough, nor are its animals enough for a burnt-offering. 17 All the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God'? 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. 30 Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; 31 but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

The doctrine of the Trinity (three persons but one God) is a crucial statement of the Church, which preserves the centrality of God, the uniqueness of Christ, the Son of God, and the vitality of the Spirit, the power of God. It is also something of a conundrum and difficult to understand. Much ink has been spilt trying to explain it and find a model for it. Our readings reinforce what we all know, that though we believe in one God, he is experienced as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In our link Scripture passage, Second Isaiah speaks of God as creator and sustainer. The prophet (chapters 40-55) was at work in the C.6<sup>th</sup>. BC, the Persians were in control of the Middle East, and their foreign policy, by which they maintained peace in a large empire, was to send all exiles home. Isaiah sees this change of policy as the 'great creator God' at work, using the Persians to bring his people home from exile. He, therefore, proclaims God's message ("Comfort my people") and sees King Cyrus as his 'anointed one' (45.1), through whom he, God, cares for his people. The people in exile may have felt helpless, but the promise of God is that those who 'wait on (Him) renew their strength' (v.31). He is not just the creator God, but also the sustaining God, and he calls us to trust him, and to follow the way of Christ in the power of the Spirit.

**SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 13.11-13**

11 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. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. 13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

**Epistle continued:**

Paul ends his second letter to the church at Corinth with his usual encouraging, yet challenging, advice. He adds greetings, as he often does, and then he prays for them, using the words of what we now call 'the Grace'. The words are so familiar, but they merit reflection, for they define the Christian. We are those who believe that our God is, primarily, a God of love, that we are blessed because of the graciousness of Christ, who expressed that selfless love, and that we, who are called to walk the same way, will be kept in relationship with, and empowered by, the Holy Spirit.

**Gospel: Matthew 28.16-20**

16 The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

No wonder that the final commission of Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, is the challenge to "make disciples of all nations". There is work to do, which flows from our relationship with the Triune God. Work for us and for all those, who come to share our faith; to realise the love of God, to accept the gracious gift of Christ and to experience the empowering of the Spirit. They will, of course, be baptised in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then they will need teaching; to learn all that they can about the will and purpose of the creating and sustaining God, as they try to follow the example of Jesus Christ and walk the same way of love, glad of the promise of the presence of Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in all that they say and do, for all time.

**Post-Communion Collect**

Almighty and eternal God, you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and live and reign in the perfect unity of love: hold us firm in this faith, that we may know you in all your ways and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory, who is three Persons yet one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**