

CELTIC EVENING PRAYER

for

TRINITY



*In the name of the Holy Father
In the name of the Victor Son
In the name of the Praying Spirit
In the name of the Three-in-One*

OPENING PRAYERS

Creator God, by your transforming power,
take the scattered stones of this day
and from them create something beautiful,
that will bring glory to your name. Amen.

**The Three who are over our head,
the Three who are under our tread;
the Three who are over us here,
the Three who are over us there;
the Three who in heaven do dwell,
the Three in the great ocean swell;
pervading Three, O be with us,
pervading Three, O be with us. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 18 : 1-8

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

He said, “If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.



Matthew 3 : 13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptised by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptised, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 28 : 18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

RUBLEV'S ICON

The Trinity has been central to Celtic worship down the ages. In the 19th century, Alexander Carmichael travelled through Gaelic-speaking Scotland, writing down prayers from the oral tradition. These were, thankfully, preserved in his work, ‘Carmina Gadelica’. A majority of the prayers are Trinitarian in nature. The Celts were able to follow St Paul’s instruction to ‘pray without ceasing’, as they had a prayer for everything they did : for example, a prayer for getting up, getting dressed, lighting the fire, putting out the fire, milking the cow and so on: below is the prayer for washing :

The three palmfuls of the Sacred Three
to preserve thee from every envy,
evil eye and death;
The palmful of the God of Life;
The palmful of the Christ of Love;
The palmful of the Spirit of Peace;
Triune of grace.

The concept of the Trinity is not the easiest to fathom. Rublev, in his famous 14th century icon attempts to depict it. Andrei Rublev was a Russian monk and he entitled his icon, ‘The Hospitality of Abraham’ – based on Genesis 18 and those three mysterious figures. However, it has come to be known as

‘The Trinity’. Rublev wasn’t alone in seeing the Abraham story as a foreshadowing of the Trinity. Abraham and Sarah are not in the picture, although the tree reminds us of the oaks of Mamre and the building could possibly be the New Jerusalem. We are told that ‘the Lord’ visits Abraham : there is ambiguity here – are there 3 visitors, or only one? The text jumps between the two possibilities.

The figures in the icon are linked by their common blue garments – the colour of the heavens - and symbolic of eternity and the whole scene is suffused with royal gold. The figure on the right represents the Holy Spirit, the blue robe covered in green (the colour of life). The central figure is the Son, his blue cloak overlays a dark red robe – the colour of the earth, the colour of blood – symbolising the incarnation and crucifixion. The figure on the left represents the Father, his blue robe covered with a translucent cloak, symbolising the eternal divine glory. Each has a halo, symbolising co-equality and each has a staff, symbolising co-authority. Notice that the table is rectangular, not round, representing time and space. It’s obviously a Communion table, with the chalice and the Son is pointing to it with two fingers, reflecting his two natures – human and divine. In the chalice is a lamb (although it’s impossible to see). The figures are angled towards each other – they seem to be giving themselves to one another, absorbed in one another – living in and for each other – the perfect expression of love. The Son is the central figure because he is the key that opens the door to the reality of God as Trinity, as it was by reflecting on his person and work that the early Church came to understand and express that God is Trinity.

God’s very being is relatedness – Father, Son and Spirit in the unity of communion. And so, in turn, for us to have a personal relationship with God it is not a matter of two separate individuals – creature and Creator – coming together - it is much deeper than that. It’s about being caught up into the very life of God, which is always personal, but never individualistic. The Trinity reminds us that Christianity is not about relationship with an isolated God to the exclusion of others, but it’s about participating in the Trinitarian life of God and participating in the community of the Church – which is it’s human reflection. A Truth perhaps keenly felt during these months of lockdown.



REFLECTION

Notice how the scene seems to beckon us. Observe the empty space at the front of the table – the perfect circle is also an open circle. Note the square shape on the front of the table. Some scholars think a mirror was attached here. We see our reflection. Are we invited to cease being observers and step into the frame – to approach the table, to share in the holy communion of Father, Son and Spirit? Is that not the meaning and purpose of worship – of being Church – of being Christian – to be drawn into, to indwell the very life and being of God? Let's spend some time meditating on the icon, as we lift up our hearts to the Father, through the Son in the Spirit.

WE PRAY

Holy Trinity, Mystery of Love,
Holy Community, Heavenly Family,
I open my heart to your presence,
making your home with me.
I sit among you, gathered at our table,
fourth member of the Trinity.
I open my heart to your peace,
settled about me like a home.
I open my heart to your whole family,
all of us beloved, all of us siblings,
all of us enfolded in your loving, peaceful presence.
All of us holy.
Amen.

OUR PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD



Ever one, Sacred Three, Holy God, the Trinity
O God beyond us, lead us forward to pray.
O God beside us, teach us gently to pray.
O God within us, still our hearts to pray ...

Holy God beyond us,
you create and sustain all things by the power of self-giving love.
Hear us, we pray, as we bring before you the needs of the world :

We bring before you the devastation caused by this pandemic, not only in our own country, but throughout the world, remembering especially the poorer nations, who suffer so much already. We remember : the people of Bangladesh and India as they try to re-build their lives in the wake of the cyclone; the people of Yemen and South Sudan suffering famine and disease, as fighting still goes on around them; we pray for all the street children of the world, the unwanted, the rejected. Bless aid workers and charities who seek to bring relief and inspire us with a generosity of spirit to help.

Triune God Hear our prayer

Son of God beside us,
you never leave us comfortless :

Be with all who are afraid – those who fear to venture out because of the pandemic, those who fear returning to school or going to hospital for the treatment they need. Those who are afraid for loved ones who have contracted the virus or for loved ones who work on the front line combatting it. Be with all victims of abuse – especially the children. Protect them, Lord and replace fear with hope, cruelty with love.

Triune God Hear our prayer

Holy Spirit within us,
fill our lives with strength and courage:

Inspire and guide all who are fighting this pandemic in so many ways : the politicians, scientists, those with the virus and the medical professionals caring for them, those making masks and gowns and those raising money for the NHS. We pray that the new measures to relieve the lockdown will prove wise and that no further spread of the virus will result. As holidaymakers begin to come into Cornwall, we pray for the safety of the staff of our surgeries and hospitals, our key workers and our lifeguards.

Triune God ... Hear our prayer ...

O Sacred Three,

We pray your peace on all who suffer – whether it be in body, mind or spirit – and we name before you those we carry on our hearts today

Grant eternal light and rest to those who have died and your comfort for those who mourn.

Triune God ... Hear our prayer ...

O God beyond us, give us faith. O Christ beside us, give us peace. O Spirit within us, give us life. Ever One, Sacred Three, Holy God – the Trinity.

BLESSING

Bless our feet that they might tread the path prepared.

Bless our hands that they might show your embrace.

**Bless our words that they might share your
grace and peace.**

**In the name of the
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Amen.

