

Closing Prayer

Merciful and gracious Father,
you showed the fullness of your love
when you gave your only Son for our salvation
and sent down upon us the power of your Spirit.
Complete within us the work of your love,
that we who have communion in Christ
may come to share fully
the undying life he lives with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers. Trinity Sunday, Year A²

CPL • LBC Year A Trinity Sunday.odt • 2020-05-23

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,*

Trinity Sunday

Principal Service readings

Isaiah 40.12-17,27-31	The majesty of God
Psalms 8	The power of God's name
2 Corinthians 13.1-13	Christ in you; have a common mind and live in peace and God will be with you
Matthew 28.16-20	The great commission to make disciples

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The Great Commission

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

Matthew 28.16-20 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

The 'Great Commission' comes right at the end of Matthew's Gospel. It is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. Christians through two thousand years have taken its instructions seriously as a mandate for mission. It begins with the disciples worshipping Jesus, though some doubting, presumably because they couldn't believe their eyes. Some

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

people are more prone to doubt than others, but at some point we have to commit ourselves, one way or the other.

The word 'all' comes up four times: Jesus has *all* authority. He sends his followers to *all* nations, to pass on *all* he has taught. And he will be with them through *all* time. There is no place outside the reach and care of Jesus. The details of carrying out the mandate may vary from time to time, but the gospel imperative to mission is always there.

There are several 'action' words in this short reading. 'Go' – Jesus sends the disciples under his authority; we can have confidence in our mission. 'Make disciples' – this is a process of teaching and learning; the word 'disciple' really means 'learner' – we never stop learning. 'Baptizing' this includes the learners in the worship and membership of the church – they aren't just learning, for they make a commitment themselves. The Trinitarian formula is inserted, perhaps shaped by its use in the early church, and then 'teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you'. There is content in the teaching, such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), and various other sections of Matthew's gospel. The Christian faith isn't about impressive traditions, or nice feelings or artistic worship, it requires commitment and obedience: learning and following the way Jesus maps out for us.

Finally, Jesus says he will be with his disciples till the end of time. How can he be with them when he is going away? Because he sends his Holy Spirit to instruct and guide them. As John puts it in his gospel, Jesus tells his disciples: 'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you' (John 16.13-14).

Quotations

1

Because the Christian God is not a lonely God, but rather a communion of three persons, faith leads human beings into the divine communion. One cannot, however, have a self-enclosed communion with the Triune God – a 'foursome', as it were – for the Christian God is not a private

2

deity. Communion with this God is at once also communion with those others who have entrusted themselves in faith to the same God. Hence one and the same act of faith places a person into a new relationship both with God and with all others who stand in communion with God.

After our likeness: the church as the image of the Trinity / Miroslav Volf. 1997

2

I didn't need to understand the hypostatic unity of the Trinity; I just needed to turn my life over to whoever came up with redwood trees.

Plan B: further thoughts on faith / Anne Lamott. 2004

3

The Word is, by definition, immanent in the divinity and active in the world, and as such the Father's revelation. A revelation of the Father without the Logos and his incarnation would be like speaking without words.

The Trinity / Karl Rahner. 1997

4

The whole of the church calendar unveils the Trinity. The Father sends the Son at Advent and Christmas, and the Son manifests the glory of the Father during Epiphany. He offers himself as a perfect sacrifice to the Father on Good Friday, and the Father rewards his self-offering by raising him from the dead. Ascended to his Father, he received the Spirit, whom he pours out on the disciples.

Theopolitan liturgy / Peter Leithart. 2019

Related topics

For further study:

Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Christology; faith; creed; images of God; paschal mystery; conversion; miracles; grace; revelation

3