

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**June 4, 2023**  
**The Holy Trinity**  
**ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

- P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C **Amen.**
- P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
- P Our help is in the name of the Lord,
- C **who made heaven and earth.**
- P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,
- C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**
- P O almighty God, merciful Father,
- C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**
- P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C **Amen.**

## Introit

Blessèd be the Holy Trinity and the undivided | Unity.\*

Let us give glory to him because he has shown his  
mer- | cy to us.

I have set the LORD always be- | fore me;\*

because he is at my right hand, I shall not be |  
shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being re- |  
joices;\*

my flesh also | dwells secure.

For you will not abandon my soul | to Sheol,\*

or let your holy one see cor- | ruption.

You make known to me the | path of life;\*

in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right  
hand are pleasures for- | evermore.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\***

**and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***

**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Blessèd be the Holy Trinity and the undivided | Unity.\*

Let us give glory to him because he has shown his  
mer- | cy to us.

## Collect of the Day

*Holy Trinity*

P Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us  
grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal  
Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to  
worship the Unity in the power of the Divine  
Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend  
us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

**Old Testament Reading**

*Genesis 1:1—2:4a*

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And 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 an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens 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.

And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed,

each according to its kind. 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 expanse of the heavens 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 expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on 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 swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And 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 according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on

the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

And 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on 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 heavens 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. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, 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 the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,

because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

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

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Second Reading**

*Acts 2:14a, 22–36*

Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice  
and addressed them, . . .

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth,  
a man attested to you by God with mighty works and  
wonders and signs that God did through him in your  
midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered  
up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of  
God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless  
men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death,  
because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For  
David says concerning him,

“‘I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand that I may not be  
shaken;

therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue  
rejoiced;

my flesh also will dwell in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
or let your Holy One see corruption.

You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will make me full of gladness with your  
presence.’

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord,  
Sit at my right hand,  
until I make your enemies your footstool.’

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Holy Gospel**

*Matthew 28:16–20*

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

### **Apostles’ Creed**

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.**

**The third day He rose again from the dead.**

**He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father  
Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living  
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**Sermon Text – Matthew 28:16-20**

**Theme – Beyond Us, With us, In Us**

Today, I want to show you what has been called  
“The Shield of the Trinity.” It is an attempt to explain



what may be unexplainable: that the Triune God is three persons yet one God.

The Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God. But the Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit; the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son. That's what is all spelled out in "The Shield of the Trinity." The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, but only one God.

We know this from a variety of Bible passages including our Gospel lesson for today where Jesus says, **"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"** (Matthew 28:18-19).

So, now do you understand the Holy Trinity? I doubt it. I don't understand it and I have a seminary education. Really, the Holy Trinity is beyond our comprehension. We can say the word, we can make diagrams to try to explain it, but I don't really think we can fully grasp the mystery of the divine three in one. We cannot possibly wrap our heads around the essence and relationships in our God as Trinity.

That's doesn't stop us from trying, though. One illustration that I have used is water. Water can be a liquid; water can be a solid, when it is frozen, and water can be a gas, when it is heated so that it becomes steam. Yet, no matter what state it is in: liquid, solid, or gas, it is still H<sub>2</sub>O. It is still water. That might be helpful to us in understanding the Holy Trinity.

The only thing is: you don't have all three at once. Either the water is a liquid, a solid, or a gas. You don't have all three at the same time. But when it comes to the Trinity, we do. The Father is always God; the Son is always God; and the Holy Spirit is always God. There is never a time when they are not God. All three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are always and fully God, at the same time.

Another way the Trinity has sometimes been explained is by using an apple. When it comes to an apple you have the outer peel, the tasty flesh, and the inner core. It is one apple, but three parts. Again this way of thinking of the Trinity falls apart. The outer peel is only a part of the apple, the tasty flesh is only a part of the apple; the inner cores is only a part of the apple.

But God the Father is not just a part of God; the Son is not just a part of God; the Holy Spirit is not just a part of God. They are all God

Perhaps you are starting to see how our best attempts to wrap our head around the mystery of the Trinity fall short. The important thing for us to remember is that our Triune God is far beyond what we can understand about Him. The important thing is for us to remember that our Triune God is three persons, one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are to believe this; we are to confess this as we do in our creeds: the Apostles', The Nicene, and the Athanasian Creed. We confess Him is this way even though He is beyond our comprehension, at least until we get to heaven.

Something else though for us to remember is that our Triune God is not only *beyond us*, He is *with us*.

That's what the last verse of our text is telling us. Jesus said, **"Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:20).

That changes everything! God is not a distant, too big to know God. He is God who cares for us; He is a God who is with us; He is a God who will always be with us.

Our text comes from the last chapter of the book of Matthew. Way back in Matthew chapter 1, we are told how the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife because **"that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"** (Matthew 1:20). It was all to fulfill what the Lord had said through His prophet Isaiah, **"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call his name 'Immanuel' which means, 'God with us'"** (Matthew 1:23).

In Jesus, God is with us. Why? It is so that He can save us. He does that by taking on Himself anything and everything that would keep us at a distance from God. He takes upon Himself our punishment – the agony of sin, the sorrow of death, even the horrors of hell, which is complete separation from God.

It too is a mystery beyond our understanding, that Jesus who is very God of very God could cry out, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"** (Matthew 27:46)? What we deserve, Jesus serves so that we can have the promise of an eternal life in which we will always be with our Triune God.

This promise belongs to all who believe and are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

the Holy Spirit. Through Baptism, the old Adam, which is in us, dies so that a new man can rise with Christ who rose for us.

God is beyond us; God is with us; and, God is *in us*. He is in us to teach us **“to observe all that [He has] commanded us”** (Matthew 28:20). As we hear God’s Word, whether that be in Sunday School class or at a Bible Study or when we are listening to a sermon or reading a devotion, the Holy Spirit is at work in us, teaching us what Jesus said and did. The Holy Spirit is at work so that we believe in Jesus, knowing that He is our one and only Savior. The Holy Spirit is at work so that we believe in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God.

We will not ever fully understand the doctrine of the Trinity until we get to heaven. Nevertheless, we will believe it and we will confess it. We will not ever fully comprehend how majestic and immense our God is, that is, until we get to heaven. But we will know that He is with us and through His Word He is at work in us. We can certainly give thanks that He is our God who is “Beyond Us, With Us, and In Us. AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church**

In the beginning, Father, Your Word spoke all things into being and from nothing You made all that is. Help us to see the imprint of Your love in the goodness

of creation and to exercise responsible care of all that You have entrusted to us.

Throughout the ages, Father, Your Spirit filled the sin-stained world with hope and called us to repentance and faith. Help us to hear the voice of Your Word and to respond with faith, confessing You without fear before all manner of people and in every corner of the earth. As You planned long before the world began, deliver us in Christ, that we may be Your own and live according to Your commands all our days.

In this day and in this time, Father, raise up for Your Church godly men to serve her as pastors and faithful teachers and church workers to make known Your saving Gospel. Raise up faithful servants who will heed Your call and serve to the best of their ability wherever You place them

In Baptism, You joined us to our Savior's death and resurrection, Father. Guide us, that we may live out faithfully the new lives born of water and the Spirit, serving You with all our bodies, minds, souls and strength. In the face of disease and death, make us bold to expect that we will be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

In government and law, Father, You work to establish and preserve order, protecting the weak and fostering godly virtue. Bless our president; our governor; and all who make, administer and judge our laws. Deliver the world from the threats of pandemic and tyranny, and preserve the nations in peace. Bless all who defend us in the armed forces, aid us in emergency and

medical fields, and inform us with news. Hinder those who oppress any peoples with mistruth, violence or fear.

In the hour of trial and in the moment of trouble, You are there, Father. Hear us as we cry to You for the sake of the sick, the troubled in mind, the wounded in heart and those who grieve [especially \_\_\_\_\_]. Deliver them from affliction as You will, and sustain them in hope with a patient heart and strength for the day.

In the company of the saints, Father, You have shown us that You will not abandon Your people but will keep them to everlasting life. Receive our thanks for those who have gone before us with the sign of faith and now rest from their labors, and bring us at last to dwell with them in Your presence forevermore.

In this hour of worship, Father, You serve us with gifts of Your grace so that forgiven we might know the gift of a clear conscience and redeemed we might honor You with all we think, say and do. Accept the sacrifice of our praise and the tithes and offerings we bring.

All these things and whatever else You know we need, we pray You to grant us, Father, for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, through whom, with whom and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory are Yours, almighty Father, both now and forevermore. Amen

### **Lord's Prayer**

○ **Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth**

**as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Benediction**

- P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be  
gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give  
you peace.
- C** **Amen.**

### **Acknowledgments**

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