

Dear Friend

And so we come to the third and final reflection on the nature of God as Triune. When we think of the Trinity, an all too common mistake is to see the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three parts that make up the whole. As a clover leaf, for example, or even as human beings, made up of body, mind and spirit. Our credal statements can also lead us in that direction, in describing the Father as the Creator, the Son as the Redeemer, and the Spirit as "The Lord, the giver of life...who has spoken through the prophets". The beautiful words in the prologue to John's gospel paint a far more interesting and dynamic picture of the Word - Jesus Christ - bringing all things into being - "Without him nothing was made that was made". In Genesis chapter 1 it is through the word - "and God said..." - that the world came to be. So we need to recognise that it is God the Holy Trinity who creates, sustains, redeems and gives life to the universe.

As we reflect more deeply on the Person of the Holy Spirit the Nicene Creed is sadly lacking! There is a good reason for this as the Council of Nicea which met in 325AD was convened in order to address the issue of the nature of Christ. I have sometimes felt that if we were writing a creed today, it would be likely to focus more on the Holy Spirit, as the Church now accepts Jesus Christ as both fully God and fully human, but quite who the Spirit is and how the Spirit works is a hotly disputed topic.

So, just as a bit of fun (!) here is my attempt at a revamped credal statement about the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. I'd be interested to hear your comments!

"We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who brooded and breathed over creation and brought light and life out of chaos and darkness.

We believe that this breath of God anointed prophets, priests and kings, and gifted the people of God so that they could worship the Lord in the beauty of Tabernacle and Temple.

We believe that the Spirit of God came upon the Blessed Virgin Mary causing her to conceive the Son of God.

We believe that the Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus with power and gave him authority to bring the Kingdom of heaven to earth, and who came in power upon Jesus' followers in wind and fire is now at work throughout the Church and the world anointing God's people so we can continue Christ's saving work, until God's will is done in earth as in heaven".

Some other aspects of the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Jesus, both convicts us of our sin, then assures us of God's forgiveness.

The dwelling place of God on earth is no longer in the Tabernacle or Temple but in the hearts of Jesus' followers.

We need the Holy Spirit if we are to be true worshippers of God and if we are to continue his mysterious work.

The gifts of the Spirit have never been withdrawn from God's people, on the contrary, the Spirit is given to every single child of God.

So in response to all this, let us ask God to equip us by his Holy Spirit to face these days of crisis and turmoil, with faith and courage, so that the Church can be inspired to speak God's Word. The Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophets has never stopped speaking.

Today may you be filled with the Holy Spirit, as you seek to follow Jesus Christ, and so bring glory to our heavenly Father.

Verses for today: [Jesus said to his disciples] "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

*John 14.15-17*

A true (??) story:

### **An Old Italian's Tomato Garden**

An old Italian lived alone in New Jersey. He wanted to plant his annual tomato garden, but it was very difficult work, as the ground was hard. His only son, Vincent, who used to help him, was in prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and described his predicament.

Dear Vincent,

I am feeling pretty sad because it looks like I won't be able to plant my tomato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. I know if you were here my troubles would be over. I know you would be happy to dig the plot for me, like in the old days.

Love, Papa

A few days later he received a letter from his son.

Dear Papa,

Don't dig up that garden. That's where the bodies are buried.

Love, Vinnie

At 4 a.m. the next morning, FBI agents and local police arrived and dug up the entire area without finding any bodies. They apologized to the old man and left. That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

Dear Papa,

Go ahead and plant the tomatoes now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances.

Love, Vinnie

Don't forget to keep smiling!

With much love and prayers

Simon