

HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY

MAY 30, 2021

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA



PRELUDE *Voices Raised to You We Offer* Setting: Scott M. Hyslop

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #795 *Voices Raised to You We Offer*

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|---|--|
| <p>1 Voices raised to You we offer;
 Tune them, God, for songs of praise.
Hearts and hands we bring in tribute
 For Your gifts through all our days.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Triune God, to You we sing!</p> | <p>3 Christ, the song of Love incarnate,
 Touching earth with heaven's grace,
For Your living, suff'ring, dying,
 For Your rising, hear our praise!
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Christ, Redeemer, Lord of life!</p> |
| <p>2 All creation joins to praise You;
 Earth and sky Your works display.
Art and music, gifts You lend us,
 We return to You today.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 God, Creator, source of life!</p> | <p>4 Spirit, flaming through creation,
 Kindle faith within each heart.
Lift our voices high in chorus;
 Through our hands Your love impart.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Spirit, Helper, breath of life!</p> |
- 5** How can any praise we offer
 Measure all the thanks we owe?
Take our hearts and hands and voices—
 Gifts of love we can bestow.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Triune God, to You we sing!

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
 who made heaven and earth.

If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?
 But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

Since we are gathered to hear God's Word and call upon Him in prayer and praise, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

(We observe a moment of silence for self-reflection.)

Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

Almighty God, merciful Father, in Holy Baptism You declared us to be Your children and gathered us into Your one, holy Church, in which You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

**1 To God on high be glory
And peace to all the earth;
Goodwill from God in heaven
Proclaimed at Jesus' birth!
We praise and bless You, Father;
Your holy name, we sing—
Our thanks for Your great glory,
Lord God, our heav'nly King.**

**2 To You, O sole-begotten,
The Father's Son, we pray;
O Lamb of God, our Savior,
You take our sins away.
Have mercy on us, Jesus;
Receive our heartfelt cry,
Where You in pow'r are seated
At God's right hand on high—**

**3 For You alone are holy;
You only are the Lord.
Forever and forever,
Be worshiped and adored;
You with the Holy Spirit
Alone are Lord Most High,
In God the Father's glory.
"Amen!" our glad reply.**

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

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. Amen.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 29

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over many waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD
flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth
and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.
May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON 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."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL John 3:1-17

The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 3rd chapter
Glory to You, O Lord.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

This chapter of John's Gospel has always been centered for us at vs 16, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.**" When we jump to that hugely important verse, we miss the rich dialog that Jesus had with Nicodemus. Nicodemus began his dialog by acknowledging Jesus as one of their most outstanding Rabbis, one who had a special connection to God. "**You are a teacher sent from God, for no one can do these signs....apart from the presence of God.**" Even a skeptic like Nicodemus could see Jesus as uniquely close to our Heavenly Father.

As their dialog played out, we get to share one of Jesus' homilies on the Holy Spirit; "**No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.....the wind blows where it chooses; you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from.....so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.**" Jesus underscored both the mystery of the Holy Spirit and His central role in bringing people to faith. All of this followed Jesus telling Nicodemus: "**You must be born again!**" Already here in chapter 3 of John's Gospel are key pieces of what we teach about the Holy Spirit, which Luther

captured as, ***“I believe that I cannot, by my own reason or strength, believe in God or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel.”***

Within the few verses of this Gospel are outlines of what the Church would teach about God as the Holy Trinity. To be sure, Jesus’ homily is far less precise than our Fathers’ and Mothers’ finally wrote down at Nicaea in the 4th century. But we should drink this all in, because the mystery of God as Three in One is here; His love for all people is here; and the specific work that we have traditionally ascribed to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is all here. As we observe the festival of the Holy Trinity today we are privileged to listen to Jesus as our primary teacher. Part of his teaching shines in His willingness to teach even a skeptic like Nicodemus. For God so loved the world that He has always and everywhere been in mission to gather the lost. He yearns for all to be saved, none lost. In Jesus’ homily, the mystery of God is presented with what we would call a missionary agenda. **“God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but to save it.”**

But we should also spend time with Isaiah today, and His wondrous vision of the awesomeness of God. Much of that is portrayed in the behavior of the angels who veil their faces and feet in God’s presence, awed by Him. And they sing!! Sing of God’s absolute uniqueness with their timeless triptych: **“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.”** We are privileged to share their awe and wonder each week as the beauty and majesty and love of God are present in our celebration of the Eucharist. Here we retell our Savior’s Holy Incarnation, as we hear the words, **“This Is My Body.”** He does not come as ghost or disembodied spirit, but as the Christ, incarnate for us and for our salvation. How He can come among us bodily is ever mystery, but with His wondrous coming the drama of our salvation unfolds, **“This is My Body given for you.”** Today let us behold that mystery alongside our joy of the God Who so loved the world. **“This is my Body”** is part of that Trinitarian mystery we acclaim each week.

In Isaiah’s vision, right after the angels acclaimed God, **“Holy, Holy, Holy,”** the prophet was immediately confronted by his sinfulness. Isaiah groans, sure that his life as over, since sinful man cannot stand before this **“Holy, Holy, Holy”** God. But one of those angels took a coal from the altar and cleansed the prophet’s lips, in effect bringing Him forgiveness of his sin. Here, today, we have no coals, but rather Jesus Himself, Bodily present, and speaking directly to us, **“Take, Eat, Take, Drink, this is for you for the forgiveness of sins.”** In Isaiah the vision ends with the whole Temple shaking and being filled with smoke, which rises and moves without feet or wings, reminding all who read the story of Jesus’ words to Nicodemus about the wind and the Spirit. Both Jesus and Isaiah acclaim the Spirit at work here, among us and very busy about it too. For God does not desire the death of sinners, but that we live. And our catechism assigns to the Spirit the awesome work of the angel’s coals: **“He fully forgives my sins and the sins of every believer.”** So forgiveness comes from Jesus in His Body and Blood, and it comes from the Spirit, Who never stops carrying forgiveness to the Church.

In most years we would now repeat the Athanasian Creed, which uniquely captures the mystery and the interconnectedness of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. This year, because we can’t confess that long Creed in our short Eucharistic gatherings, this year I ask you to confess again your Baptismal Creed. Though the doctrine of the Holy Trinity can be thought of as incredibly complex, today bask in the simplicity of Jesus’ homily and rejoice that such a wondrous God not only loves the whole world, and sent His only Son to redeem all the world, but He loves you by name, and redeems your life by the blood of the Lamb. Rejoice that he takes time to lead Nicodemus to closer relationship with God, a sign of how He is with us, yearning for us all to be gathered into His Father’s arms in the mansions He is preparing for us. And rejoice in Your Baptism in the Name of the Father-Son and Holy Spirit.

We celebrate this festival on a weekend when our nation pauses to remember those who, with their lives, won, preserved and strengthened us as a free nation. Lincoln said at Gettysburg that the world would little remember what the dignitaries who gathered to dedicate the Gettysburg cemetery

had done and said, but that it would always remember what these honored dead had done. That too is a mystery, a mystery with which every soldier wrestles when war comes. How can I leave those I love most in the world to go off somewhere where they are not and risk never coming back to them? I tried and failed to explain that to my family in letters I left behind when I went to war. But I also tried, when I stood at the American cemetery at Omaha Beach to deliver a homily about these honored dead. Earlier I also stood at the American cemetery at St. Michel, France, and tried again. Different wars, endless graves, enduring mystery. The size of their sacrifice rises up when you look at the perfectly aligned gravestones. Their sacrifice remains one of the treasures of this nation, and finally you can only stand in humble awe. May that humble awe also be yours as you behold the glorious mystery of the Holy Trinity. So in love with us lost sinners, that God gave up His only Son, who freely chose to die on the accursed tree, far from heaven and His home. All for us.

But let me take you closer to God's physical reach into our lives; come with me and touch a name etched on a gravestone at Arlington, or Omaha, at Quantico or Indiantown Gap. These soldiers were all real men and women, sons and daughters, husband and wives. They learned a special comradeship with each other in the awfulness of war, and often spoke of these with whom they shared danger and privation as their other family. Few of them had such noble thoughts as to sacrifice for the nation. But they did know about giving that last extra effort for the sake of their battle buddies. ***"Heroes proved in liberating strife,"*** our great American hymn says. To be both and at the same time bound to wife and children, and to battle partners, is the mystery of soldiers and soldiering. To be thrice Holy yet bound to the last and least sinner is the mystery of God. Acclaim Him. Adore Him. Serve Him. And be thankful to be called His own, a sheep of the most precious flock under heaven.

HYMN OF THE DAY #507 Holy, Holy, Holy

- 1 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**
- 2 Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Which wert and art and evermore shalt be.**
- 3 Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.**
- 4 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**

APOSTLES' CREED

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.

OFFERING Holy, Holy, Holy Setting: David A. deSilva

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, although Your ways are inscrutable and Your judgments unsearchable, we praise you on this day for revealing the glory of your name and the path of our salvation. Through Your Word, and led by the Spirit, give us an ever-growing understanding of the depths of Your riches, wisdom and knowledge, that we may honor you in faith and glorify You forever. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of hosts, You gave Your only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Bless the work of all who proclaim this Gospel, and especially missionaries as they carry it to the ends of the earth, that the nations may hear of Your love in Your Son and be saved through Him. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of hosts, send your Spirit to call all people to repentance, that being cut to the heart they would seek your grace. And bring the saving waters of Baptism to those not yet cleansed, and Baptismal renewal to those who have, that eyes would be opened to the fullness of your mercy and hearts turned to the new life you give. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of hosts, on this Memorial Day weekend we give thanks for those who have served our nation through military service, and we remember with gratitude those who gave their lives for us and for the cause of freedom. Help us to honor their sacrifice by using our liberty responsibly. Bless our nation with your protection, your care and your Holy Word, that we would live peaceably and honorably together. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of hosts, strengthen and uphold all who suffer, especially those who mourn and those who are struggling with illness or injury, including... And be with all who are travelling, all who are seeking employment, and all who rejoice, including Erik and Sugar Easterly, married this weekend. Remind them that since You are at their right hand they cannot be shaken. Gladden their hearts, cause their tongues to rejoice and make their flesh dwell in hope. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of hosts, in Holy Communion you take away our guilt and atone for our sin by touching our unclean lips with Christ's cleansing body and blood. Prepare the hearts of all who commune this day, that they would truly know your presence and be strengthened in their faith. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. **Amen.**

THE 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

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord make His face shine on us
and be gracious to us.

The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

SENDING HYMN #822 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring

1 Alleluia! Let praises ring!

**To God the Father let us bring
Our songs of adoration.
To Him through everlasting days
Be worship, honor, pow'r, and praise,
Whose hand sustains creation.
Singing, ringing:
Holy, holy,
God is holy;
Spread the story
Of our God, the Lord of glory.**

2 Alleluia! Let praises ring!

**Unto the Lamb of God we sing,
In whom we are elected.
He bought His Church with His own blood,
He cleansed her in that blessed flood,
And as His bride selected.
Holy, holy
Is our union
And communion.
His befriending
Gives us joy and peace unending.**

3 Alleluia! Let praises ring!

**Unto the Holy Ghost we sing
For our regeneration.
The saving faith in us He wrought
And us unto the Bridegroom brought,
Made us His chosen nation.
Glory! Glory!
Joy eternal,
Bliss supernal;
There is manna
And an endless, glad hosanna.**

4 Alleluia! Let praises ring!

**Unto our triune God we sing;
Blest be His name forever!
With angel hosts let us adore
And sing His praises evermore
For all His grace and favor!
Singing, ringing:
Holy, holy,
God is holy;
Spread the story
Of our God, the Lord of glory!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE Alleluia! Let praises Ring Setting: Keith Kolander

ALTAR FLOWERS: "In remembrance to fellow soldiers of the 1st Armored Division, who, in Desert Shield/Desert Storm, made the ultimate sacrifice. May they rest in the arms of Christ."

By Pastor Lehrer

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