

## FROM THE FATHERS

*A letter of St Athanasius (296-373)*

It will not be out of place to consider the ancient tradition, teaching and faith of the Catholic Church, which was revealed by the Lord, proclaimed by the apostles and guarded by the fathers. For upon this faith the Church is built, and if anyone were to lapse from it, he would no longer be a Christian either in fact or in name.

We acknowledge the Trinity, holy and perfect, to consist of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this Trinity there is no intrusion of any alien element or of anything from outside, nor is the Trinity a blend of creative and created being. It is a wholly creative and energising reality, self-consistent and undivided in its active power, for the Father makes all things through the Word and in the Holy Spirit, and in this way the unity of the holy Trinity is preserved. Accordingly, in the Church, one God is preached, one God who is above all things and through all things and in all things. God is above all things as Father, for he is principle and source; he is through all things through the Word; and he is in all things in the Holy Spirit.

St Paul teaching in his second letter to the Corinthians says: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* For grace and the gift of the Trinity are given by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Just as grace is given from the Father through the Son, so there could be no communication of the gift to us except in the Holy Spirit. But when we share in the Spirit, we possess the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Spirit himself.

## WE BECOME WHAT WE PRAY: NOTES ON THE SACRED LITURGY

Composed in the mid-500s, the **Creed of St Athanasius** is one of the three Creeds of the Western Church (the others being the Apostles' and the Nicene). It is called 'Quicumque Vult' in the BCP from the opening words in Latin meaning 'Whoever wishes [to be saved]'. It is also known as the Pseudo-Athanasian Creed because it is not composed by St Athanasius - it reflects his theological concerns but was written after his death. The Athanasian Creed is a statement of the Catholic Faith in two halves: lines 1-28 set out the Church's belief in the Holy Trinity, and lines 29-44 address the nature and person of Christ. Read lines 1-28. The thrust of these lines is to stress two things: the unity of God, and the distinction between the Divine Persons. It says: *The Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.* What does this key phrase mean? It means that God is utterly and indivisibly One because each of the Persons of the Trinity share the same divine nature which unites them completely and perfectly: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally and eternally God because they share the same the divine Substance. What they share can never be divided. Yet, at the same time, within the profound and perfect unity of their divine nature they are distinct from one another. They are not interchangeable: 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. This is what it means by 'neither confounding the Persons' - 'confounding' here means 'confusing'. Read and pray it through this Trinity Sunday and glorify God the Holy Trinity.

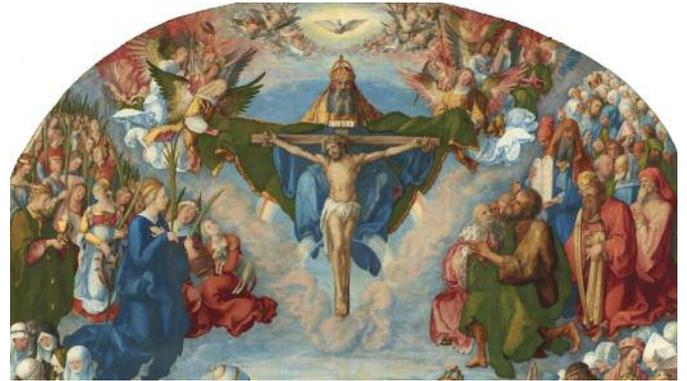
## PRAYERS TO REMEMBER

Sing this Trinitarian prayer each day, perhaps before eating or going to sleep (NEH 244):

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise him ye creatures hear below,  
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Bishop Thomas Ken 1637-1711

## HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD OF HOSTS



The Feast of the Holy and Undivided Trinity is the feast of God's inner life, the feast of God as he is in himself. Our ceaseless joy is that in the Christian Revelation, the One True God has opened up himself to us. He has unfolded for us his Trinitarian life in order that we might know him, and in knowing him, love him, and in loving him, be saved by him for ever. Think about it for a moment: you only share your inmost self with those whom you most deeply love. Well, our knowledge of God's Trinitarian life has come about for precisely the same reason - love. God in his love for us has uncovered himself because it is his eternal desire that we should know and love him. For a Christian, the Trinitarian name and being of God is *fundamental*. Without our knowledge of the Triune Majesty we cannot be saved. Therefore, God the Holy Trinity must be continuously on our lips and in our heart: it is in the name of the Trinity that we are baptized into Christ, in the name of the Trinity we are blessed, in the name of the Trinity we receive absolution for our sins. God's Trinitarian name we invoke whenever meet in the Sacred Liturgy. Each time we utter the name of the Holy Trinity we are confessing the inconceivable dynamism and uncontainable momentum of the Divine Life. The One God, whose life is eternally and ecstatically Three, leaps out of heaven and into the world to raise the world to the heavens when the Father sends the Son and gives the sanctifying Spirit. Only God the Holy Trinity can be the God of our salvation.