

**SERMON- Trinity (C)**  
**Charles R. Cowherd**

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15

**St. Timothy's (Herndon)**  
**June 15, 2025**

Psalm 8

**OPENING:**

I am sure that you have heard that this year, 2025, is the 1700-year anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, from which we get our Nicene Creed, which indeed was formulated 17 centuries ago in a city now in modern-day Turkey.

The Reverend Mark Michael, former Interim Rector here, is there as we speak—along with thousands of folks across the range of Christian denominations—to commemorate that seminal moment in the Church.

That summer, in the year of our Lord 325, they figured out the Christological nature of God the Son and God the Father, they hammered out this Creed that we say every Sunday, and they fixed the date of Easter on the calendar.

Not too shabby for 3 months and 300 odd church leaders without air-conditioning or word-processors.

That happened then and there,  
what possibly could it have to do with us living our lives...  
here and now, in Herndon 2025?

Today is Trinity Sunday, there is no better day to reflect on it.

**GOSPEL**

Jesus said to the disciples:

“I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now.”

Was he talking about the Trinity?

This 3-in-1, 1-in-3, great mystery and doctrine of the Church.

That has been the teaching.

That the Gospels and New Testament contained the *seeds* of what we were to later understand about the Trinitarian God. Those seed were not explicit at planting ... but were only made clear after centuries of reflection and study and worship.

Thus, the thinking goes, it took about three hundred years from Christ's time to Nicaea for the Church Fathers to iron out “the Trinity” that we can understand today.

## **TRINITY:**

To be honest, with apologies to the folks at Nicaea, I think it's still a work in progress:

As a preacher, the great fear on Trinity Sunday is one of two things:

- 1) That one will commit some heresy in explaining the Trinity. "The Trinity you see, is like a company. God the Father is the CEO, Jesus is the Regional Branch Manager, and the Holy Spirit is the Traveling Salesman on the Road."
- 2) OR, perhaps even worse, that I will give an utterly doctrinally correct sermon explaining the nature of the Godhead, the *perichoresis*, the *homoousios*, the procession, and the *hypostasis*... which utterly fails to explain why we should care or why it matters.

Our Gospel this morning, then, is a good one to help us on that front.

Jesus is saying goodbye here and, rather than tying up loose ends, he ups the ante on who he is and what that means. Frustratingly to us and to the disciples, his parting message does not give us all the answers but rather 'name drops' his partners in the divine—God the Holy Spirit and God the Father as a way of saying—"You ain't seen nothing yet."

## **PENTECOST:**

Last week, of course, we had our great Pentecost celebration with Episcopal Visit.

Before the service, the Bishop spoke to the confirmands.

Picture 40+ members of St. Timothy's clad in red, jammed into the choir room:

Teenagers, adults, English-speaking, Spanish-speaking

It was not unlike the first birthday of the church:

"When the Day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place."<sup>1</sup>

When the Bishop finished his remarks, he asked if anyone had any questions.

What followed, this happens every 2 years, were the longest 10 seconds of your rector's life.

Finally Geoff Bloomfield, Todd's Husband, broke the silence, raised his hand and asked:

"What if...?" he asked "What if, like I know that I want to be confirmed, but what if I don't know everything, like I feel like I have so much to learn?"

Thankfully, the Bishop did not ask to see the curriculum from the Confirmation classes but instead said this:

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2.1

“That’s okay” he answered “we are all still growing in Christ.

We will all always be ‘children of God.’ You don’t need,” (the Bishop said) “to understand every part of the Nicene Creed.

If there are parts that you don’t understand, other people will say them for you.

That’s why we gather in community.”

The Bishop had begun his remarks by asking folks when, and in what tradition, they had been baptized. He explained that he did that because

“I want you to know that you cannot screw that up. Baptism is full and final.

You can learn more, or go to Seminary, or you can take classes. But God has, and God will always, *have you*, regardless of whether you can explain the Trinity or analyze the Creed or whatever.”

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

And then some other brave folks asked some incredible questions.

I quoted from Acts in our Scripture about all being in one place.

maybe Don Maclean sung it better:

*Oh, and there we were all in one place,*

*A generation lost in space*

*With no time left to start again.*

The song “American Pie” is talking about Woodstock, but he could have been talking about Pentecost 2025 here at St. Tim’s, or the Council of Nicaea 1700 years ago or Jesus with his disciples in our reading.

A moment of pregnant energy, of hopeful and confusing beginnings, of dynamic, Spirit-filled music and togetherness and dreaming.

I apologize if you were not here... I feel like I sound like an aging hippie:

“It was like Woodstock... man.”

I invite you to GO BACK and watch the thing on YouTube, like I did this week.<sup>2</sup>

## **CREED**

Because, it’s one thing to have a Creed, it’s another to live it.

We went out and lived it on Saturday, Pentecost Eve.

Jesus said:

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; for he... will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

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<sup>2</sup> [Saturday 7:00 Service Pentecost and Confirmation - June 7, 2025](#)

Dare I say, that I think Jesus was talking about June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 here at St. Timothy's. When that Andean flute hit its first chord in the Sanctuary during the prelude, I was thought: "Uh oh, 'come Holy Spirit come.'"<sup>3</sup>

When our beautiful children of every race were arrayed on these altar cushions, I thought: "the Spirit filled the entire house where they were sitting, and a tongue rested on each of them."<sup>4</sup>

When our voices, in Spanish and in English, and in Hebrew, and in Arabic and in German and in French, I thought: "all of them, (Medes and Parthians and Elamites, those belonging to Cyrene and visitors from Rome) were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages."<sup>5</sup>

When the cast of sinners and saints stood up to be confirmed, I thought the Holy Spirit is going to shake this church up from its very foundations.

(When I have told my peers and colleagues about the number, people were shocked and surprised: bewildered, amazed and stoned [!] in response.)

When it got to the Lord's Prayer that Julio does in Spanish to the tune of *The Sound of Silence*,<sup>6</sup> I thought: "this is enough to make this all worth it, it's enough to make you believe in Jesus. It's EVEN enough to make you believe in the Trinity."

## CONCLUSION

In that great piece of American pop culture Scripture, Don Maclean famously sang: "Three men I admire most the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. They took the last train for the coast"

Unlike the mournful conclusion of that song, the Holy Spirit is alive here in this community.

(With apologies for the masculine rendering of the Trinity... the Bishop last week, I believe, invoked the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person of the Trinity as feminine. That's a helpful corrective.)

I pray that we sustain it, that we keep the flame alive, that we increase our bonds between Saturday and Sunday, that we nourish our children across the life of this parish, that we not be afraid of new voices and new music and strange tongues and weird fire.

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<sup>3</sup> [Prelude- Andean Flute](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Children's Sermon](#); Acts. 2.4

<sup>5</sup> [Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation](#); Acts 2.9-11

<sup>6</sup> [Lord's Prayer](#)

I pray that this is not naïve idealism or Boomer nostalgia,  
I pray that what we have here at St. Timothy's, in the Diocese of Virginia, in the  
Episcopal Church, in the Body of Christ can be shared and celebrated and offered  
up to a world in desperate need it.  
I pray that the Holy Spirit at St. Timothy's can be nothing short of the antidote to  
the poisonous rhetoric that inflames our body politic.

I pray that we can offer a contrasting image of the division and discord that  
consumes our country.

I pray that people might say:  
What is this Holy Spirit that you speak of?  
How can you understand each/ love each other across distance and divide?  
Can I get a taste of that?  
Who is this Trinity that you worship?

**AMEN**