

# Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Prayers, Readings, Reflection

“Welcome to another short act of worship for the Parish Church of St Martin. For those who are able to follow it as written, I hope it offers some comfort, encouragement and a sense of being together despite the distance between us.” Rev Jonny



*Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you,  
before you and within you.*

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

*All* **Amen.**

The Lord be with you

*All* **And also with you**

My brothers and sisters,  
as we prepare to celebrate the presence of Christ  
in word and sacrament,  
let us call to mind and confess our sins.

Remember, Lord, your compassion and love,  
for they are everlasting.

Lord, have mercy.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions,  
but think on me in your goodness, O Lord,  
according to your steadfast love.

Christ, have mercy.

*All* **Christ, have mercy.**

O keep my soul and deliver me;  
let me not be put to shame, for I have put my trust in you.

Lord, have mercy.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon *you*,  
pardon and deliver *you* from all *your* sins,  
confirm and strengthen *you* in all goodness,  
and keep *you* in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*The Collect for the day*

O God, you declare your almighty power  
most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:  
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,  
that we, running the way of your commandments,  
may receive your gracious promises,  
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

## THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

*A Reading from Proverbs Chapter 9*

Wisdom has built her house,  
she has hewn her seven pillars.  
She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,  
she has also set her table.  
She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls  
from the highest places in the town,  
“You that are simple, turn in here!”  
To those without sense she says,  
“Come, eat of my bread  
and drink of the wine I have mixed.  
Lay aside immaturity, and live,  
and walk in the way of insight.”

*Gospel Reading, from John 6: 51-58*

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have

no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**All Praise to you, O Christ**

### *Reflection*

Over the last few weeks, we have been reflecting on the Eucharist in light of the repeated statement that Jesus makes: ‘I am the Bread of Life.’

We have considered the implications of the eucharist on our communal way of life, and on our own personal encounter with God in the receiving of Communion. I now want to draw you in a little closer still, and consider what is happening on the altar – what becomes of the bread and wine when we celebrate communion? Does anything happen at all?

Suffice to say this question has caused no end of conflict within the church, and I’m not going to give you any hard and fast answers today.

But simply put, at the more Roman Catholic end of the spectrum you have those who believe – almost as though it were scientific fact – that the bread and wine physically change their substance (though not their appearance) and become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We call this transubstantiation. ‘A change in substance’.

As such, once it has been sanctified, the elements ought to be treated with the highest reverence. Any that isn’t consumed is stored in a gilded box, with a candle set next to it that should never go out. Our red light above the high altar would have been installed for that purpose – when the light is on, Christ’s body is physically here in church. When one enters its presence, one ought to kneel and pray; it is as if you are in the real presence of Christ.

At the other end of the spectrum, are those who see the eucharist as a memorial – a knot in our handkerchief – reminding us of what once happened at the Last Supper, but in no way creating or invoking the real presence of Christ here, now, today in the bread and wine. The bread and wine remain just bread and wine – they have changed neither in appearance, nor substance,

and their significance rests solely in the mind of the believer rather than in the elements themselves.

The great protestant reformer, Zwingli, likened it to a soldier heading off for war who leaves his wedding ring with his wife to remember him by. The ring is precious to the wife, and, each time she touches it, it brings her great comfort, peace and hope: but the ring is not the husband, nor can it ever be. The bread and wine are precious reminders, and that is, in itself, enough.

So if that's the spectrum of understanding – where do we fall? I think it's probably wise to say that none of us should feel bound to take a side. You may even feel different about communion at different times – you may be maturing from one view to another, or you may change your mind each week – that's fine. There are no thought police here.

As one might expect from the Anglican church – over the years we have tended to aim for a bit of a fudge somewhere in the middle. We are, after-all, both Catholic *and* Reformed. And I personally don't think that's such a bad thing.

If you listen to words we use in the Eucharistic prayer, you can find meaning that accommodates all understandings, without excluding any:

*'Grant that .... These gifts of bread and wine may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

*'And so father... we celebrate this memorial of our redemption.'*

We are a broad church, and we welcome a variety of believers from a host of different backgrounds. We are orthodox (so we don't just believe anything we like) but our orthodoxy is generous, not exclusive.

And at the end of the day (and here I will pin my colours to the mast) I don't believe that our faithfulness should ever be defined by the ideas we believe, but by the actions we take. In the language of the church that is normally translated as Orthopraxy over Orthodoxy. What we practice trumps what we claim to believe.

So put it this way: does the eucharist make us better people? Do we – by sharing in this holy meal together – seek to live a life where we love our neighbour and our God? Does our encounter with God in the eucharist bring us closer to God in prayer? Whatever you may understand by the bread and the wine – does it make you thankful to receive it?

When all is said and done – that's what the word actually means. 'Eucharist' means 'thanks'. Thanksgiving for God. Thanksgiving for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Thanksgiving for our place within the great scheme of God's plan. Thanksgiving for life, love and faith.

What happens to the bread and wine is a mystery – no one can say for sure. But a mystery is *not something that we will never understand*, but rather

something that *we will never stop understanding*. New every day are the depths of meaning that we can draw from this gift. So be thankful. Let us Give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise. Amen.

### *Prayers of Intercession*

*Pray for one another – those in our church community*  
*Pray for the Parish, the Island and the World*  
*Pray for the sick, the isolated, the anxious and depressed*  
*Pray for the dying, and those who mourn*  
*Pray for yourselves, and for your own needs*

Lord in your mercy  
**All Hear our prayer**

*The Intercessions may end as follows*

Merciful Father  
**All Accept these prayers**  
**for the sake of your son,**  
**our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

### *The Peace*

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.  
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.  
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the life-giver.  
The peace of the triune God be always with you  
**All and also with you.**

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us

**All 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, the power, and the glory  
For ever and ever. Amen.**

*The Blessing.*

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,  
defend you on every side,  
and guide you in truth and peace;  
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and  
the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*All* **In the name of Christ. Amen.**