

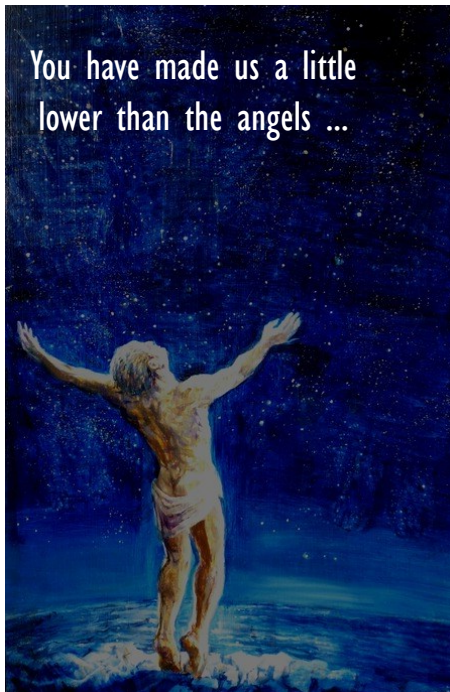
PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY – YEAR C

Psalm 8

Today's well known and well loved psalm is the first psalm of praise in the psalter, and a celebration of creation. It is unique in that it is not a call to praise, but actual words of praise addressed directly to God: it celebrates our relationship with the One who holds us in being. Although this is the prayer of one person, it is addressed to the Lord *our* God, thus acknowledging that we are not alone on earth but in relationship with others. It is also interesting to note the recurring use of 'you' and 'your' throughout the psalm. The author also uses the word 'man' as a non-gendered, generic term, though language-inclusive translations opt for 'human beings' or 'humankind'.

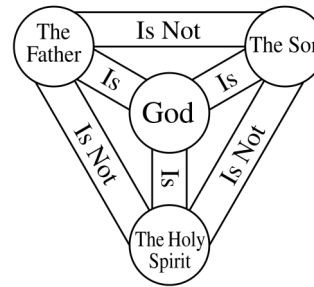
The psalm response is taken from the identical first and last verses (not included in today's reading), which act as 'book ends' and give a sense of completeness. The psalm lends itself well to be said or sung by two groups or choirs, one answering the question put by the other.



Iain McKillop, *Painted Psalms* (<https://mckillop.weebly.com/>)

Psalm 8 also reflects Genesis 1: 25–27, which speaks of humankind being made in the image of God. The writer ponders in awe and humility at the whole of creation and the power or dominion which God has given us over all of it.

Reflecting on what we have been given may lead us, too, to reflect on the care we must take to protect and preserve God's creation, and on the interdependence which exists between it and ourselves. We have '*power over the works of [his] hands*', but we also depend on those works for our very survival.



Today the Church celebrates the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity – a mystery that lies at the heart of our Christian faith. Though the word 'Trinity' does not appear in the Bible and is not easily defined, it was central to the experience of early believers, as it is central to our own. Our Christian identity is defined by our baptism 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', and we acknowledge the Trinity whenever we make the sign of the cross.

Gospel John 16: 12–15

The Gospel chosen for Trinity Sunday Year C is an extract from St John's Farewell Discourse, where Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit and the Father and their three-way relationship. He is here seeking to comfort his confused and anxious disciples.

The gender of the Holy Spirit

The 'Paraclete' of St John's Gospel (*parakletos*: advocate or lawyer) is male, although the word for 'spirit' in Hebrew (*ruach*) is feminine, and the New Testament Greek word (*pneuma*) is neuter. Biblical translations (as here) tend to refer to the Holy Spirit as 'he', though some find it helpful to think of the Spirit as female.

'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.'

Jesus is aware that his disciples do not fully comprehend what is going to happen. This will only happen once they have received the Holy Spirit.

'When the Spirit of Truth comes ...'

The Holy Spirit, sometimes also called the Advocate or the Paraclete, is here called the Spirit of Truth. It is an expression also found in other Christian documents around the time John wrote his Gospel.

'... he will guide you into all the truth ...'

The disciples won't face the future alone. As Christians we are always seeking truth, and the Spirit will guide us into a deeper knowledge of the Truth.

'and he will declare to you the things that are to come.'

The Spirit will enable the disciples to come to some understanding of the events about to happen from the Last Supper to the Resurrection.

'He will glorify me ...'

The Spirit is not imparting new teaching, but rather is in total harmony with both the Father and the Son to whom he will give glory. The Spirit of Truth will help us experience God the Father and his Son Jesus in our daily lives.