

Trinity Episcopal Church

Cranford, in the Diocese of New Jersey



“Light of the World” — Jyoti Sahi

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Rite I Holy Eucharist

February 8, 2026 at 8 AM

The Reverend Andrew David Kruger, Rector & Presider

Casey Woodruff, Senior Warden & Preacher

Anthony Joel Rafaniello, Director of Music

Kathleen M. Murray, Junior Warden

Welcome

Andrew Kruger

The bell is rung and the People stand.

Acclamation

BCP 323

Presider Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People **And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen**

Collect for Purity

BCP 323

Presider Let us pray.

People **Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hid:
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love thee,
and worthily magnify thy holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Great Commandment

BCP 324

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

Kyrie

BCP 324

Presider Kyrie eleison.

People **Christe eleison.**

Presider Kyrie eleison.

**Glory be to God on high,
and on earth peace, good will towards men.**
**We praise thee, we bless thee,
we worship thee, we glorify thee,
we give thanks to thee for thy great glory,**
O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
**that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.**
**Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.**
**Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,
have mercy upon us.**
**For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord;
thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art most high in the glory of God the Father.**
Amen.

Collect of the Day

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Presider Let us pray.

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins and give us,
we beseech thee, the liberty of that abundant life
 which thou hast manifested to us
 in thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

The People sit.

First Reading

Isaiah 58:1-12

Reader A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. “Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 112:1-10

Beatus vir

BCP 755

1. Hallelujah! Happy are they who fear the Lord *
and have great delight in his commandments!

2. Their descendants will be mighty in the land; *
the generation of the upright will be blessed.
3. Wealth and riches will be in their house, *
and their righteousness will last for ever.
4. Light shines in the darkness for the upright; *
the righteous are merciful and full of compassion.
5. It is good for them to be generous in lending *
and to manage their affairs with justice.
6. For they will never be shaken; *
the righteous will be kept in everlasting remembrance.
7. They will not be afraid of any evil rumors; *
their heart is right; they put their trust in the Lord.
8. Their heart is established and will not shrink, *
until they see their desire upon their enemies.
9. They have given freely to the poor, *
and their righteousness stands fast for ever;
they will hold up their head with honor.
10. The wicked will see it and be angry;
they will gnash their teeth and pine away; *
the desires of the wicked will perish.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

Reader A reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.

But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

The People stand.

Gospel

Matthew 5:13-20

Presider The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St Matthew.

People **Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Presider The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise be to thee, O Christ.**

Homily

Casey Woodruff

Nicene Creed

BCP 326

The People stand.

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God,
Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate
from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

BCP 328

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church and the world.

Almighty and everliving God, who in thy holy Word hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all humanity: Receive these our prayers which we offer unto thy divine Majesty, beseeching thee to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord; and grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops and other ministers especially Sarah, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sean, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Sally our Bishop, and Andrew our Rector, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments.

And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this congregation here present; that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy Word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

We beseech thee also so to rule the hearts of those who bear the authority of government in this and every land especially Donald, our President, Rebecca Michelle (Mikie), our governor, and Kathleen, the mayor of this town, that they may be led to wise decisions and right actions for the welfare and peace of the world.

Open, O Lord, the eyes of all people to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works, that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, they may honor thee with their substance, and be faithful stewards of thy bounty. And we most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succor all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear *[especially...]*, beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service; and to grant us grace so to follow the good examples of all thy saints, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant these our prayers, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

BCP 331

Let us humbly confess our sins unto Almighty God.

The People kneel.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against thee
in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved thee with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in thy will,
and walk in thy ways,
to the glory of thy Name.
Amen.

Absolution

BCP 332

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Comfortable Words

BCP 332

Hear the Word of God to all who truly turn to him.

Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden,
and I will refresh you. *Matthew 11:28*

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *John 3:16*

Peace

BCP 332

The People stand.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People **And with thy spirit.**

Offertory Sentence

BCP 344

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name;
bring offerings and come into his courts. *Psalm 96:8*



*The Ushers pass the collection plates among the People.
Alternatively, you may give to Trinity online:
scan the QR code and go directly to our Breeze link.*

The Presentation of Gifts

1 Chronicles 29:14b

Presider All things come of thee, O Lord:
People **And of thine own have we given thee.**

Eucharistic Prayer II

BCP 340

Presider The Lord be with you.
People **And with thy spirit.**

Presider Lift up your hearts.
People **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

Presider Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.
People **It is meet and right so to do.**

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, thou hast caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of thy glory in the face of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts:
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

All glory be to thee, O Lord our God, for that thou didst create heaven and earth, and didst make us in thine own image; and, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to take our nature upon him, and to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption.

He made there a full and perfect sacrifice for the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again.

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks to thee, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink this, all of you; for this is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy people do celebrate and make, with these thy holy gifts which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; and looking for his coming again with power and great glory.

And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us, and, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, to bless and sanctify these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy dearly-beloved Son Jesus Christ.

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, whereby we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies. Grant, we beseech thee, that all who partake of this Holy Communion may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, and be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction; and also that we and all thy whole Church may be made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord;

By whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. **AMEN.**

Lord's Prayer

BCP 336

And now, as our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

**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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking the Bread

BCP 337

The Presider breaks the consecrated bread. A period of silence is observed, then the Presider says

Presider Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
People **Therefore let us keep the feast.**

Prayer of Humble Access

BCP 337

**We do not presume to come to this thy Table,
O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,
but in thy manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs
under thy Table.
But thou art the same Lord whose property
is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ,
and to drink his blood,
that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.**

Invitation

BCP 338

Presider The Gifts of God:
People **For the People of God.**

Holy Communion

The ushers guide the people to receive Holy Communion. All who hunger for God, including children, are cordially invited to share the Gifts of God offered at this table. Whoever you are, wherever you are in your life's journey, you are welcome here.

All persons may, but no person must, receive communion in both kinds to receive the full spiritual benefits of communion. Wine is offered by way of a sip from the common cup. You may choose to receive only the host.

Gluten-free wafers are available by simple request to the priest.

Post Communion Prayer

BCP 384

Presider Let us pray.

People

**O Lord Jesus Christ, who in a wonderful Sacrament
hast left unto us a memorial of thy passion:
Grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries
of thy Body and Blood,
that we may ever perceive within ourselves
the fruit of thy redemption;
who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

BCP 339

The Presider pronounces the blessing

And now may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The ministers recess.

Dismissal

BCP 340

Presider Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**



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For Friends, Visitors and Newcomers

Welcome to Trinity Episcopal Church in Cranford, New Jersey. Thank you for joining us in worship. The bulletin is designed to make you feel at home; and includes everything you need for the service (liturgy, hymns, rubrics, etc.). Please connect with us; introduce yourself to the ushers so they can make you feel more comfortable. Father Andy is in the narthex (entrance) at the end of the service; it is an opportunity to connect on a more personal level. All are invited to Fellowship Hour in Sherlock Hall, immediately after the service. Every Thursday by 2 PM, an email blast is sent with hyperlinks to sign-up sheets, methods to contribute to the parish or other charitable organizations, ways to contact individuals or receive information on events, etc. Please contact the parish office to receive it or alternative methods of communication.

Lectionary & Liturgy

Today and for the next several Sundays, we hear portions of Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. This continues the theme of Epiphany, the showing forth of Jesus as the Son of God. Note also that the way of living which he teaches enables those who follow his teaching to themselves be "epiphanies" of God's presence in the world. Isaiah warns us that living rightly does not depend on carrying out religious devotions such as fasting. He is speaking in a time when the people were careful to fast but ignored God's call to live at peace with each other and to care for the poor and helpless. Religious devotions that are merely outward show do not enable us to be right with God. In seeking to speak to the divisions in the Corinthian church, Paul takes on those who are proud of having special and private knowledge about God, believing their "wisdom" sets them apart from other church members. However, Paul announces that God's wisdom is far greater than human wisdom and that God's wisdom is "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Jesus' Epiphany is fulfilled in our own time in Word and Sacraments and in the lives of those who through baptism have been made part of his body the church. In the liturgy, our part in making Jesus known to all people is initiated in the Eucharistic feast and fulfilled as we are sent into the world in his name to care for the helpless and to be instruments of God's peace and reconciliation.

From The Rite Light: Reflections on the Sunday Readings and Seasons of the Church Year. ©2007 Michael W. Merriman. Church Publishing Inc., NY

What you need to know today...

Sunday School Today during the 10 AM Eucharist for children in PreK-3 through Grade 4.

Children's Choir Rehearsal Today at 11:30 AM in the church.

Soup Sale \$1,027 was collected which is being donated towards the repair of the parking lot; gratitude is offered for the support.

Bread Sale \$406 was collected which is going to the AIDS Resource Foundation for Children, an organization that helps children with AIDS and other diseases; gratitude is offered for the support.

Seamen's Church Institute Today through March 1, Outreach is collecting for SCI's annual "Christmas at Sea" program. Check this week's email blast for items needed which can be placed in the box for Seamen's in the conference room. Thank you.

Altar Flowers and Sanctuary Candle There are no altar flowers during Lent; however, the sanctuary candle is available for personal attribution, to remember loved ones, to honor others, to celebrate lives. The deadline is 4 PM Wednesday each week; multiple attributions are allowed.

What you need to know this week...

Parish Office Hours Office Manager Marion Nechuta is available Tuesday through Thursday from 12:30 to 3:30 PM. Please call before arriving; at other times she may still be contacted via parish email.

Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer Monday to Friday at 8:30 AM and 5 PM, respectively, online.

Trinity Women's Group Monday, February 9 from 7-8 PM online.

Trinity Adult and Handbell Choir Rehearsals This Wednesday, February 11.

Compline This Thursday at 8 PM online.

Knitting Circle Saturday, February 14 from 9 to 10 AM in Witherington Hall.

What you need to know in the future...

Annual Mardi Gras Celebration Next Sunday, February 15 after the 10 AM service, it will be replete with feasting, 50/50 raffle, baskets of the "7 deadly sins" and fun. Thank you to Justin Bain and John Beier for offering to be the parish chefs.

Trinity Episcopal Senior Youth (TESY) Next Sunday, February 15, from 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM in Witherington Hall. All confirmed youth, ages 13-18, are welcome.

Ash Wednesday February 18, there will be a 7 AM and 12 noon Rite I Service, and a 7:30 PM Rite II Service with choir.

Fellowship Luncheon Thursday, February 19 from 12:30 PM to 2 PM in Witherington Hall. Ray Lord will speak of the Prison Ministry, of which he and his wife Estelle are very involved. Meal is stuffed peppers with sides and desserts. Call Susan Olszewski (908-757-9561) or Susan Nelson (908-397-3944) for more information.

Sandwich Sunday Sunday, February 22; contact Marion Nechuta (marionnechuta@yahoo.com or 908-451-4498) or Helen Shteynberg for information. There are several ways to participate in this ministry (links to sign up are in the email blast):

- Sign up to supply items needed for the bags and the sandwiches
- Saturday, February 21 from 10 AM to 11 AM – assemble food bags in Sherlock Hall
- Sunday, February 22 after Fellowship Hour – transport sandwiches & food packets to St John's and help serve food

Trinity Episcopal Senior Youth (TESY) Saturday, March 14 from 10 AM to 12 Noon. TESY is hosting a cleanup of the Sherlock Hall loft; pizza and refreshments will be provided. Volunteers of all ages are welcome. To sign up, email Katie Annarelli (kathleen.m.annarelli@outlook.com).

Spiritual Reflection, January 29: Mission in the Early Church

The growth of the Christian church in the Roman Empire is mysterious. Scholars who spend their entire lives studying this phenomenon continue to find it surprising. Why did this minor mystery religion from the eastern Mediterranean – marginal, despised, discriminated against – grow substantially, eventually supplanting the well-endowed, respectable cults that were supported by the empire and aristocracy? What enabled Christianity to be so successful that by the fifth century it was the established religion of the empire? If our ancient Christian ancestors had strategies for converting people, they did not teach these or write about them. As Origen put it in a Sunday sermon: "You catechumens [*those seeking baptism*] – who gathered you into the church? What goad compelled you to leave your houses and come together in this assembly? We did not go to you from house to house. The Almighty Father put this zeal into your hearts by his invisible power." Instead of urging the Christians to go from house to house, or recommending that they replace their evangelistic methods with something more effective, Origen expressed his patient trust in God's "invisible power."

Alan Kreider, author of 'The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire,' asserts that there are three primary reasons for the rapid growth of the early church: A focus on the virtue of patience; A way of being in the world that was compelling; and an insistence on forming Christian character in those seeking baptism. Patience was centrally important to the early Christians. They talked about patience and wrote about it; it was the first virtue about which they wrote a treatise, calling it the "highest virtue." They believed that trusting in God, should be patient – not controlling events, not anxious or in a hurry, and never using force to achieve their ends. The source literature rarely indicates that the early Christians grew in number because they won arguments; instead they grew because their habitual behavior (rooted in patience) was distinctive and intriguing. Their way of being in the world enabled them to address intractable problems that ordinary people faced in ways that offered hope. The early Christians were also uncommonly committed to forming the habits of their members. They believed that impatient habits were deeply ingrained in people who were raised in Greco-Roman societies. From experience they knew that if people were to develop patient reflexes, they needed time, the friendship of mentors, and the opportunity to grow in patient ways of living that were the normal standard for Christians. Amen.

Kreider, Alan. The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Kindle Edition.

Spiritual Reflection, February 5: Mission & Patience

Last week I wrote about the unlikely numerical growth of the early church, and identified that our Christian ancestors' elevation of the virtue of patience was one of the catalysts for this growth. This week I'm going to dive into the writings of two early North African theologians to explore what they had to say about the connection of mission and patience.

Let's begin in the 250's with Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, who was dealing with a 'boatload' of problems: Christians had been through severe testing; some believers were tired, many had died from a recent epidemic, some were losing hope, some were in danger of lapsing into impatient practices, even engaging in acts of violent revenge against their enemies. In the face of these developments, Cyprian sensed that patience was the characteristic virtue that would help the church live as Christians in their pressure-filled situation. According to Cyprian, all of Jesus' behavior – his entire missional style – was patient. This culminates in the passion, in which Jesus does not proclaim his majesty but silently perseveres even through death. Cyprian shifts the emphasis of his day from obeying Christ's precepts, to following in Christ's footsteps. Cyprian witnessed the church growing and believed that the growth was because Christians were distinct from their contemporaries – living patiently in relation to their neighbors and enemies, doing good to them, and waiting for them to come to faith.

To Augustine, the 5th century Bishop of Hippo, the Christian tradition of patience as taught by Cyprian – emphasizing a life that trusts God and therefore does not control things, is not in a hurry, and does not use violence – must have seemed anachronistic. Conceived in a time of persecution, it seemed out of touch with a world in which emperors now 'served' the Lord. In a way that Cyprian had not acknowledged, Augustine could see that when patience is an unqualified virtue, it can lead vulnerable people and groups to be un-creatively servile in the face of their oppressors. Augustine argued that patience, for all its beauty, has its limits; it must never stand in the way of actions that love deems necessary: When "the lust of the world" brings about calamities that people fail to resist, and when pride leads people to put up with "what seems intolerable," then what is at work is "not patience but madness." Ironically, Augustine articulates this theology of the need for love to direct patience in order to provide a rationale for his own impatience with those he deemed heretics. In doing so Augustine opened the way for ecclesiastical and political powers to rapidly unify and grow the church.

I wonder how you respond to these two quite different approaches to patience? Personally, I'm moved by the purity of Cyprian's vision of patience, but I'd be lying if I didn't also admit to finding it somewhat idealistic (perhaps I'm guilty of underestimating the power of God). Like most moderns I identify quickly and easily with Augustine's impatience with injustice, but I'm decidedly uneasy with the implication of coerced conversions therefore being appropriate; when motivated by love. Both of these theologians help me to think more deeply about the various challenges of our time, and the kind of patience required by Christians in our context.

Kreider, Alan. The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Kindle Edition.

Cover art - "Light of the World" by Jyoti Sahi.

Collection of the artist, who writes, 'A lamp for my feet' is an image that especially resonates with the everyday experience of a village Indian Christian. Recalling words from scripture will be a daily source of guidance and encouragement, and – especially for those socially oppressed – a source of newly confident self-identity. The Art Ashram is situated in Silvepura Village, North Bangalore, where the Sahi Family have been living since 1972. There are a number of facilities at the Art Ashram for creative expressions, and groups have been coming to use the studios, and learn from the various skills of the Sahi Family.

2026 Lenten Course: The Eight Passions of the Soul

This Lent and Holy Week, the congregation will explore the 8 passions of the soul as they were taught by St John Cassian, who died around 435 AD. He was a disciple of St. John Chrysostom and in his writing and teaching he shared much of the spiritual wisdom of the Christian East with his Western brothers and sisters. The focus is on his treatise to Bishop Kastor, titled 'On the Eight Vices' taken from *The Institutes, Books V-XII*. Cassian's writing teaches us how to develop our self-knowledge and awareness, so that we can relate to the world without selfish illusions.

The course begins on Thursday, February 26 at 7:30 PM and continues every Thursday in Lent and includes services on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week; 8 sessions in all. Each session (listed below) will begin in the church with evensong and conclude in Witherington Hall with a simple soup supper and an opportunity for further discussion. An excellent book to read in conjunction with taking the course is Rowan William's "Passions of the Soul."



NB: Please sign up to volunteer to read at evensong; assist with setup and takedown; offer to make soup; and indicate the intention to attend so that it can be catered appropriately. The link is on the weekly email blast or you may use the QR code (left). Here are the session dates and themes:

- Thursday, February 26: Gluttony
- Thursday, March 5: Unchastity
- Thursday, March 12: Avarice
- Thursday, March 19: Anger
- Thursday, March 26: Dejection
- Monday, March 30: Listlessness
- Tuesday, March 31: Self-esteem
- Wednesday, April 1: Pride



Website: TrinityCranford.org

Instagram: [@trinity_cranford_1872](https://www.instagram.com/trinity_cranford_1872)

Facebook: Trinity Episcopal Church, Cranford

Connect to Online Services and Meetings: us04web.zoom.us/j/595488321

Meeting ID: 595 488 3214

Password: 1872

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