

Sixth Sunday of Easter 2026
A Sermon Preached by Fr Ian M Delinger
on May 10, 2026

Acts 17:22-31 / Psalm 66:7-18 / 1 Peter 3:13-22 / John 14:15-21

*The sun has risen. Let us greet the day.
Christ has risen. The stone is rolled away.
Christ has risen. He has given us the victory.
Christ is alive. He has risen from the dead.
Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

In Him we live and move and have our being.

In the Bible, that statement has quotes around it. I spent quite a bit of time trying to find out whom Paul was quoting, and it seems to be from another Greek writer who isn't referenced in the scripture, the 6C BCE Cretan seer Epimenides. But from this text in Acts, it has been fully absorbed into Christian theology and sits squarely alongside each of us being created in the image of God.

I don't know if you heard the news a couple of weeks ago that a high-profile public official posted an image of himself as Jesus on social media. I can confidently and unequivocally state that "*In Him we live and move and have our being*" did NOT mean *that*! We have been acknowledging for several decades now that the Historical Jesus was *not* white, like in our own Jesus the Good Shepherd Window, and he definitely wasn't *orange*! So, as we reflect on Christ within us, let's just put that bit of blasphemy aside and focus on how the Christ within us is indeed about *Christ*.

A couple of weeks ago, when we heard the story of Thomas needing to see and touch Jesus' wounds before he would believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, I introduced you to the *Gospel of Thomas* and the notion that Thomas' twin was the Jesus within himself. We firmly believe that Christ dwells within us, based on this statement in Acts and also Jesus' words in today's Gospel:

I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

The more I reflected on the notion that Thomas' twin was the Jesus within himself, the more I thought about how different this world would be if really put more energy into the part of the Baptismal Covenant that calls us to *seek and serve Christ in all persons*, including the Christ within ourselves. I think the world would be a profoundly different place.

At the University of Chester, I was Chaplain to the Faculty of Health & Social Care. On their very last day of a 3-year course, I taught Nursing students about Spiritual Care. I introduced the topic by sharing a model of the person developed by Hildegard Peplau, a 20C nurse who was the first after Florence Nightingale to publish anything about nursing. Her theory focused on the interpersonal relationship between the nurse and the patient. Her model suggests that the *whole person* is comprised of Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Social and Spirituality dimensions. Nurse and theologian John Swinton took Peplau's model one step further. He suggests that what holds the 5 dimensions of a person together is the Spirit. The Spirit flows through all five dimensions of a person.

The five vital dimensions of the human person ... derives its purpose from this movement of the spirit, and its meaning and content from the particular context and spiritual tradition of the individual.

It's important – both for nursing purposes and from the perspective of Christian theology – that these 5 dimensions are fully integrated. The spiritual dimension cannot be separated from the other 4 dimensions; body and soul are one and not at opposition with each other.

I think this Model of the Person helps us understand who we are theologically. It hasn't been a topic of conversation among Christians until very recently under the discipline of *theological anthropology*. I don't know much about theological anthropology, but in my reading this week, I was able to understand the history of

theology of humanity as it was laid out, and I largely agree with the main thought that preceded theological anthropology. Colin Crowder writes that:

There is no systematic theology of human being in the bible, but as Richard Norris says, “The scriptural ‘way of talking’ about human beings is systematically theological in the sense that human individuals are identified and understood as such through their relationship with God. Their being is coram Deo [before God]. ‘God’ is the name of the ultimate context in which and to which they are responsive.”¹

And several theologians – from Clement of Alexandria in the 2C, Augustine in the 5C & 6C and Calvin the 16C – formed our way of talking theologically about humanity in that the knowledge of the self and the knowledge of God are inextricably linked. So, let’s look at how God and humanity are connected through Peplau’s Model of the Person and the 5 dimensions of Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Social and Spirituality.

The **Intellectual Dimension** is probably the easiest to tackle. As Episcopalians, we tend to approach our faith very cognitively. We have a yearning to *know* about God. When talking about spiritual development, we discuss the balance between knowledge and experience. For many, God is an intellectual pursuit – the relationship with God is through knowing more about God.

At the Chaplaincy for the Universities in Manchester, the Eucharistic Prayer acknowledged that God is part of our intellectual pursuits:

For Your gift of the inquisitiveness to explore and examine this world, through numbers and words, through theories and ideas, we praise You.

¹ “Humanity” in *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*. Colin Crowder.

Discovering God in our **Emotional Dimension** is as simple as 2 words: *Jesus wept*. If God as the human Jesus can weep, we know that God is part of our emotional dimension. If God as the human Jesus can get angry and overturn the market stalls in the temple, we know that God is part of our emotional dimension. If God as the human Jesus had anxiety as He did in the Garden of Gethsemane, we know that God is part of our emotional dimension.

For a long time, I have theo-babbled my understanding of God in our **Social Dimension**. I have flippantly said many times that God created humanity because God was bored! While that may be too simplistic, God did create with the expectation of being in relationship. But more tangibly, for me, the distinction between prayer and worship is private versus corporate or communal. Prayer is private, and worship is corporate, when the community comes together to pray.

Humans are social animals. To live a solitary life is a special and unique call that a very few are called to. Our coming together for worship is the God within us bringing us together as the Body of Christ. And when 2 or 3 are gathered in His name, says the Lord, there He is in the midst of us.

God within our **Dimension of Spirituality** may seem straightforward, but “spirituality” is something we talk about a lot but never define. What is spirituality? Gordon S Wakefield says that:

Spirituality is essentially life in the Holy Spirit, the life and love of God Himself, released by the death and glorification of Jesus Christ. Grounded in a sense of incarnation, it both transcends and involves the material and physical, the means of subsistence, and the satisfaction of bodily appetites.²

THAT’S why we never discuss the definition of *spirituality*! We just get on with it. Let’s go back to a simpler definition from the Peplau and Swinton model. They

² “Spirituality, forms of”. *Oxford Companion to Christ Thought*. Gordon S Wakfield.

suggest that our Spirituality Dimension includes: *meaning, value, transcendence, connectedness, hope, purpose*. In traditional theology, our meaning and purpose come from God. We have been struggling to define what that means for 2 millennia now, and it is probably best summed up in the Baptismal Covenant.

Being created in the image of God of course gives us intrinsic value; we are connected to one another through Christ; and our hope is in the name of the Lord: who made Heaven and Earth. Our hope, of course, is a new life after this one: Eternal Life.

That leaves us with God in our **Physical Dimension**. When we talk about being created in the image of God, I think most of us immediately go to our physical being. This is where things got really tricky with Gnostic Christianity and Dualism. How people were created was how Gnosticism became a heresy, not that Christ is within us and that we need to seek the Christ within us. Dualism – which Gnostics believed – relies on the notion that the body and the soul are separate, the body is evil and the soul is good. That is what makes Gnosticism a heresy. Yet that Dualism is something we struggle against all the time.

Our physical bodies were made Holy by the Incarnation. Matter was made Holy by the Incarnation. That is what we believe, yet we still fight against a dualistic view of our physical bodies, particularly when Paul in his letters condemns matters of the flesh.

Certainly when talking about diversity, equity and inclusion, in church circles we are keen to emphasize that people of any race or ethnicity are indeed created in the image of God. We do that to emphasize that God is not only a consummate reflection of all of us, but even much greater than the sum of all of us.

By virtue of the Incarnation, through the *enfleshment* of God as Jesus, God dwells in our physical selves. It's that simple.

That Christ dwells within us or that in Him we live and move and have our being is not an AI generated image of any of us as Jesus. That's self-explanatory: it's artificial.

I focused on God in us. But I started with *In Him we live and move and have our being*. That Jesus died and rose again means that we have been raised with Him. In the waters of Baptism, we are buried with Christ in His Death. By it we share in His Resurrection. It is because of what God has done through Christ *for us* that *In Him we live and move and have our being*. It's a continuous 2-way system:

Jesus is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us.

And the foundation of that continuous 2-way system – so says Jesus – is *love*.

I'll leave you with a prayer from the 16C Sarum Primer:

*God be in my head,
And in my understanding;
God be in my eyes,
And in my looking;
God be in my mouth,
And in my speaking;
God be in my heart,
And in my thinking;
God be at my end,
And at my departing.*