

The First Sunday after Pentecost, Trinity Sunday
May 31, 2026
St. Michael's Church
The Rev. Joshua Wong
Gospel reading: John 17:1-11

Let us pray:

Holy, Triune God, we praise you—Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—Three in One and One in Three. Your majesty is beyond our full understanding, yet, you invite us into your divine communion of love. Open our hearts to experience your profound mystery, and let our lives be a reflection of your perfect unity and grace. In the name of the Holy Trinity we pray. *Amen.*

Today is an unusual day on the Church Calendar. It is about the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity—that God is three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in one Being. Trinity Sunday is the only day of the entire church year that is devoted exclusively to a doctrine—which is never mentioned by name in Scripture. From the beginning, Christians had experienced God as their Creator, also as their Redeemer, and also as their Sustainer. But, it took several centuries for them to agree on how these different experiences relate to each other, given that they also experienced God as One. You may also wonder as well.

To understand this doctrine and why we honor it, we need to take a short history lesson into the formation of the church we know today. The Doctrinal

development of Trinitarian theology was tied to the Roman Empire. When Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity through his mother St. Helena. He was a devout believer, and discovered that the early church was fractured because of their disagreement about God being three in one. By the way, Constantine was the person who legalized Christian worship, thus allowing underground churches to worship without fear. Constantine helped to establish the unification of the trinitarian theology when he convened at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Subsequent councils, like the First Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, further refined and finalized the orthodox Trinitarian. Finally, the Trinitarian formula emerged, and hence we have today the Nicene Creed, the Apostle's Creed and the Athanasian Creed, which all define the statements of Christian Trinitarian theology. Celebration of Trinity Sunday was approved for the western church by Pope John XXII in 1334.

Now, with the brief history lesson out of the way, it's easy to forget that the central tenet of our faith is not just that we are created by God, but that God walks among us, most fully in the person of Jesus, and also in the stranger and the oppressed and the marginalized, and God leads us to new depths of faithfulness in the power of

the Holy Spirit. God is still, even in every moment today, creating, walking among us, and leading us.

The Trinity gives us perhaps the most complete understanding of what God is like: God creates us purely out of God's love and desire for our relationship; we see this desired relationship early in the Hebrew Bible when God is intimately involved with the Israelites. God relentlessly pursues us, even stepping in to offer to die so that we might live; and abides with us. To bring this idea of an active Triune God to our current times, it helps to think of the Trinity in this way:

The Father wills,

The Son shapes that will for us,

and the Spirit empowers us to respond to it.

What I mean is this: When we read the Hebrew scriptures, also known as The Old Testament, we have learned that God the Father wills for humans to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. To act justly involves respecting all human beings who are created with the image and likeness of God. When God reminded the people of Israel to love mercy, He meant that we should take special care of

those on the margins of society, particularly the widows, orphans, and strangers.

To walk humbly with God includes valuing the God-given gifts of each other, not dominating or excluding the other. Walking humbly also involves recognizing our own limitations and faults.

Then, when we read the New Testament scriptures, we discover clearly that Jesus embodied those qualities of acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with his heavenly Father. In Jesus' lifetime, Jesus not only talked about these virtues, he helped shape them by how he acted. He fed the hungry, he healed the sick, and he treated foreigners and minorities as having dignity and rights. Jesus embodied and shaped our understanding of the will of the Father for justice, mercy, and humility.

In our two-thousand-year history of Christianity, the driving force has always been the power of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel and Epistles describe the Spirit as our advocate and counselor. The Spirit teaches us that when we experience God, we see the source of truth and love. St. Paul mentions the long list of *the gifts* of the Holy Spirit to build up the Church, as well as *the fruits of the Spirit* for those who seek to follow Jesus. When the Church relies on the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment, renewal and hope spring up.

The Father wills,

The Son shapes that will for us,

And the Spirit empowers us to respond to it.

This is the work of the Trinity.

For us in our daily life, we are often caught in much anxiety, anger, confusion and uncertainty. Let us not forget the tenet of our faith, that we are created by God, God walks among us, and God leads us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we celebrate the Trinity, the three-in-one, we remember that the essence of God is built upon relationships. We are not meant to live alone as isolated Christians. We need each other support in order to survive. That is why we come together on a regular basis. There is a relationship between the three-in-one Trinity, there is a relationship between the Trinity and us, and there is a relationship we have with one another in the human race.

When we live a trinitarian life, we depend upon God's Holy Spirit for the wisdom, courage and strength to enable us to respond to our modern times in a Christ-shaped way. Since we are all one in Christ, we are meant to act together as his continuing presence in our world. Although our problems seem huge, but we are called to be faithful in our own situations in whatever ways that are possible for us. I will always remember what Bishop Little said in his sermon at my installation here: "When we don't think we can, God can." The good news is that together we are already doing great and powerful things for God. We are developing a habit of daily meditation, we are caring for young families and their journey of faith, and we support work with students, the homeless, the veterans and the hungry. Our weekly prayer list is another example of the power of the Trinity. It's not just a list of names, but each person had someone who requested our prayers. Together in corporate prayer we have an immense power we possess for each person on our list. When I end with a blessing asking God's love to hear our prayer, we are joining our request together to God. This church is the work of the Trinity, this is God's gift to you. God led us to this church to care for each other. Every time we talk to each other, whether it be at coffee hour or not, we are building support and care. This is where Christ shaped relationships are formed. This happens when we serve together, give our alms together, and take communion side by side.

Today's Forward Day by Day speaks about the Trinity this way:

Some of us may be tempted to see the Trinity as a mystical description of God that is far beyond our understanding. But we cannot label God as a thing or an idea or merely part of a mythic story. God is just as much a verb as a noun. Indeed, I think it's impossible to define the trinitarian God accurately with just three titles. God is certainly Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we might add additional titles to help us perceive God's majesty and breadth. Sustainer, Mother, Redeemer, Lover, Beloved.

This idea of the Trinity has helped me grow in my faith and realize that God's presence in our lives comes in many ways: in times of beauty and in the simple, everyday aspects of life. We cannot fully grasp God, but we can and must give thanks for the many ways in which the divine shows up in our lives and in our world. When have you discovered the living God as Redeemer? Creator? Beloved? Amen.

My friends, don't be dismayed or feel overwhelmed when you hear bad news during the week. The Trinitarian understanding of God with us, among us and working through us is at work. We, as the body of Christ, are called to explore more deeply what will be our Christ-shaped, Spirit-empowered response to the crises ahead. How do we the church respond to the inequality between the rich and the poor, the removal of rights to the voiceless, or our response to unnecessary wars. What we choose to do both personally and publicly in the coming years will reveal whether we are willing to let the Holy Spirit take us to where God is calling us. May the Triune God find us faithfully prepared and ready as instruments of peace in the world. AMEN.

FINAL BLESSING

Loving Father, we thank you for adopting us as your children. Give us the grace to walk in your wisdom and truth.

Gracious Son, we thank you for your sacrifice that redeems us. Lead us to serve and love others just as you have loved us.

Empowering Spirit, we thank you for your presence within us. Comfort us in times of sorrow and ignite our faith to do your work in the world.

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

A few weeks ago, we read a passage from John 14 that speaks about God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Advocate for us, the sending of the Holy Spirit. It said, “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Trinity Sunday is the only day of the entire church year that is devoted exclusively to a doctrine—that Jesus was with the presence of the Father before the world existed. God has given Jesus all authority over all people. Jesus’ words were given to him from the Father, so that we may know that Jesus is from the Father. Jesus’ work is to glorify the Father. Before Jesus ascends to heaven, he asks the Father to protect us in his name that we may be one, as they are one. The one whom God has sent to do this work is the Holy Spirit, the third part of the Trinity. While Jesus is no longer on earth, the spirit of God is here to do his work.

<https://www.towergrovechurch.org/blog/the-sunday-sermon-the-trinity-a-mystery-for-our-time>

<https://stpaulcathedral.org/the-sunday-sermon-the-mystery-of-the-trinity/>