

The Holy Trinity

May 31, 2026

Text: Matthew 28:16-20 (Gospel)

Other Texts: Genesis 1:1-2:4a (Old Testament); Acts 2:14a, 22-36 (Second Reading)

“Let Us Worship the Trinity”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from the one true God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As we celebrate the Festival of the Holy Trinity, we come face-to-face with some difficult words and phrases. “Blessèd be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity.”¹ “You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty.”² “In the confession of the only true God, we worship the Trinity in person and the Unity in substance, of majesty coequal.”³ And then, on top of it all, this is traditionally the one Sunday of the year that we confess the third great creed of Christendom, the Athanasian Creed. Consequently, some bemoan this Sunday, complaining that the liturgy is “dogmatic,” “heady,” and “dry,” and the creed is “long,” “wordy,” and “repetitive.” Would it be better to follow some of the popes of the past who rejected a Holy Trinity Sunday, claiming that the Trinity is already confessed and worshipped every Sunday?⁴

While perhaps tempting to some, the Christian answer is “No, it would not be better.” First, the words used on this Sunday are *a confession of the Scriptural truths concerning the nature of God*—that He is one undivided divine essence, yet at the same time three distinct and complete divine Persons. Remember, man was created to know God rightly in order to worship and praise Him in perfect relationship. That’s why it is no surprise that one cannot have *saving* faith if God is not even known. Hence it is not only proper, but *necessary* that we take the time to learn and confess the amazing truth of the Trinity. For He alone is God and there is no other.

Dear Christians, Holy Trinity Sunday takes us deeper into the Bible, into theology, calling for an increase in Christian maturity from us. For while the liturgy and creed might sound “dogmatic,” “repetitive,” “heady,” and “dry,” they remind us of something essential—that God is *so much more* than what we know or even *can* know. Knowing there’s a God, sure, only a fool rejects that.⁵ But His triune nature is something that our reason could never know, figure out, or even guess at within the limits of the natural revelation of God in the creation and conscience.

The Holy Trinity is a *mystery*. Not one to be solved, for He is not a problem. Not one to be fully understood, as even the holy angels and the sinless saints in heaven who see and know far more than we do being in the greater revelation of glory, still cannot comprehend God’s nature. No. It is a mystery that is to be believed as far as God has revealed it to us. So, for example, our Old Testament Reading from Genesis, where the three divine Persons say, “Let *Us* make man in Our

¹ The Antiphon of the appointed Introit.

² The appointed Collect of the Day.

³ The Proper Preface for Holy Trinity.

⁴ Popes Alexander II in the eleventh century and Alexander III in twelfth century. It was not until the fourteenth century that Pope John XXII ordered this festival to be observed.

⁵ Psalm 14:1. See also Psalm 53:1.

image, after *Our* likeness,”⁶ but Scripture then states, “So God created man in *His* own image,”⁷ as there is only one God. And even more clearly is the command to baptize “in the name (singular) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (plural).”⁸

God has revealed this truth of His triune nature and so we are to believe and confess it. That’s why the various words we use in our worship, and all the more today, are not an academic *explanation* of God, for any attempt must fall short of explaining the inexplicable. But they are a faithful *confession* of what God says in His Word. Nothing more. Yet nothing less either.

That God in His being is a mystery, and even that which He has revealed to us remains beyond our ability to grasp, must not be lost on us. It should work in us fear, awe, reverence, and humility. It warns us against the pride that would place God within the limits of our thoughts and feelings. It reminds us that God is to be worshipped and praised *for who He is*, and not solely for what He does or can do for us, for such is pure arrogance and selfishness. Truly digging into the mystery that is the Trinity, the incomprehensible God who has created all things visible—the entire universe of time, matter, energy—and invisible—the spiritual realm of angels and the souls of mankind—puts us in our proverbial place. We can’t help but wonder with the psalmist,

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son
of man that you care for him?⁹

Yes, what is mankind? Before the Triune God, both as His creatures and, worse, as sinners, we, with Abraham our father, can and must confess, “I am but dust and ashes.”¹⁰ Dust and ashes because He is the Creator, we are but creatures, our first father made from the dust of the ground. (Our first mother was made from the rib of the man of dust, so men and women are all man(Adam)kind.) More, *worse*, we are dust and ashes because we are bound to return that under the Almighty Trinity’s curse upon our rebellion, as our sin undoes the blessing of God, the bodies form undone by decay, life replaced by death. One can only wonder how Adam and Eve questioned and went against God’s word of warning when they were in the midst of Eden’s perfection. Yet, one can equally wonder how we question and go against God’s word of warning against sin in our own lives especially after seeing and experiencing the effects of His judgment and curse upon mankind and the creation over the last six millennia. I guess we’re just chips off the old block; though nothing to be proud of there.

But it is the midst of this reality of judgment that the incomprehensible Triune God reveals an incomprehensible attribute, grace, His completely unearned and undeserved love for us. Not because of us, what we have done or might yet do, but despite us. He made us in His image that we would know Him rightly and have in us holiness and purity, and a perfect obedience, which came from neither compulsion or threat, nor from the promise of gain, but solely from a love for our God. And we ruined it, losing the image, merely having the shell of that which once was

⁶ Genesis 1:26.

⁷ Genesis 1:27.

⁸ Matthew 28:19.

⁹ Psalm 8:3-4. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰ Genesis 18:27.

something so noble. But while righteous judgment came, so also came the promise. The promise of a Savior from sin and all its effects, even death, even hell.

And so the mystery of the Trinity is revealed in that most precious way: our salvation! From all eternity, the Triune God knew what would happen and had a plan to redeem us. In that incompressible grace, the Father set forth the plan of salvation, sending His Son to become one of those wrath deserving rebels to save them from that very wrath. The Son, though God and Lord, willingly carries out this plan. He who put the Law into the hearts of men, who gave it again on tablets of stone at Mt. Sinai, becomes incarnate in the Virgin Mary's womb, puts Himself under that Law, both in perfect obedience to it and to die under its curse upon sin, all as our substitute. And still as our risen priest He intercedes for us, as our king rules all things for our benefit, as our prophet, continues to send the Holy Spirit. And that same Spirit, who spoke by the prophets and apostles, and still speaks through the Scriptures He inspired as well as the ministers and members of His Church who teach, proclaim, and share His Word, calls people to repentance over sin and faith in Christ Jesus, which is faith in the most blessed and holy Trinity.

The works of God are marvelous, filled with mystery. How much more mysterious and wondrous is the doer of those works—God Himself. By nature, we know that God is there. But by the special revelation of the Word, the incarnate Word, Christ Jesus, and the written Word of the Bible, we know that He is Triune, and that the Holy Spirit in Baptism has united us to Him.

There God's name was placed upon us; He claims us as His own. The Father has become our Father. He adopts us when we are united to Jesus, our brother in the flesh, redeemed by His bloody sacrifice, forgiven and cleansed when we are washed in the spiritual birthing waters of Baptism, the source of new life from which we draw all our lives through faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit fills us, making us Christians by creating faith in us, keeping us in saving faith through the Word and the blessed Sacrament of Jesus' body and blood, and dwells within us as His temple that we would grow in a new life which turns from sin to holiness, love, and all manner of good works. His presence being the down payment of the resurrection of our body unto glory and the life everlasting. All this, under the gracious will of the Heavenly Father.

It is an act of God's grace that we know Him as Trinity, and it is a holy work of faith in and love for God to then acknowledge who He is, which we do in a special way today. So in joyful faith we confess His triune nature, acknowledge His omnipotence in creation and providence, and worship and praise Him for the salvation He has won for us in Christ Jesus, His Son our Lord, and their giving of the Holy Spirit with all His gifts and graces. A worship and praise that fills our lives as we live as His people, walking in His ways now and forever. Amen!