

# Trinity Sunday

Year A, 2026

Ex 34:4b-9      2 Cor 13:11-13

Dn 3:52-56      Jn 3:16-19

## *De Trinitate, breviter*

The readings for today's Mass on this Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity are brief. The prayer dedicated to the Trinity, the Glory be, is brief. So I thought it would be a good idea for today's homily to be brief as well. I said it's a good idea. Whether that good idea becomes reality, we'll have to see...

But just because something is brief does not mean that it is insignificant or unimportant. I've pointed this out to you in the past, especially on Trinity Sunday, when we've examined that very briefest and most recited of Catholic prayers, the Sign of the Cross, and seen how deeply Trinitarian it is, how it is important to speak its words, all of them, with reverence and attention: "In the name of the Father, *and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*" ... not just "Father, Son, Holy Spirit." Our prayer as Catholics begins and ends with a spoken invocation of the Blessed Trinity as we physically sign ourselves with the reminder of our redemption. And so these two great mysteries of our faith – the Trinity and the Cross of Jesus – are put constantly before us, in brief, compact form.

The Trinity is a mystery, as God is a mystery. Mystery, though, does not mean myth. A mystery can be understood, but never completely, fully. A mystery is not something to be "figured out," but something to marvel at in wonder and awe. You don't "figure out" the Grand

Canyon or a spectacular sunset. You take it in, and in doing so, you realize that it is beautiful, and in that beauty there is goodness, and in that goodness, truth.

Truth, goodness, beauty: in Catholic philosophical and theological thought, these are called the transcendentals, and they are convertible, meaning each one contains and leads to the other two. All that is good is also true and beautiful; all that is beautiful is also good and true; and all that is true is also good and beautiful. They are distinct, and yet they are also one. There is a communion of oneness, a unity in and among beauty, goodness, and truth.

Mystery, like the mystery of the Trinity, is knowable, but only partially (1 Cor 13:9-12). In a mystery there is both light and darkness, that which can be understood and that which remains unfathomable, the revealed and the concealed.

Take our first reading from Exodus, for example. I mentioned this same passage two Sundays ago when we commemorated the Ascension of the Lord Jesus – how a cloud took him from their sight. In the scriptures, the cloud both reveals and conceals; it is a mysterious presence. Moses goes up on Mt Sinai, where the Lord comes down in a cloud, which conceals the grandeur of God's glory from Moses' eyes. But at the same time, God reveals something of himself to Moses: God proclaims his name, "*LORD.*" He is who is, YHWH, the Name that the Hebrews would not pronounce out of reverence for the holiness of God. God also reveals his nature: I am

*“The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.”* Whatever else is said about God, either in the scriptures or in theology, this is what God says of himself, and this is the reality of God that Jesus himself exemplified in his words and deeds. Jesus reveals to us the nature of the Father, of the Godhead itself: merciful, gracious, kind, faithful, compassionate.

Last Sunday, too, on Pentecost, as we contemplated what it means to live according to the Holy Spirit, we recalled the role of the Holy Spirit, which is to lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13). Those who are led by the Spirit of God are meant to accomplish the works of God, produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And in our second reading today, from St Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle exhorts us yet again to live according to the Spirit: *“Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace...”* Do these things, he says, and this will be the result: *“the God of love and peace will be with you.”*

Stack up the words the Lord uses to describe himself in our first reading from Exodus against Paul’s exhortation in our second reading, and tell me you don’t see a certain unity in the midst of the variety of words: *“The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.”* *“Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you.”* Paul’s injunctions are but the human application of the divine attributes, a call to actualize the communion of the Trinity with one another and therefore to live in communion

with God, *“for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen”* (1 Jn 4:20).

Paul then signs off his second and final letter to the Corinthians with a trinitarian salutation: *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you.”* Grace. Love. Fellowship. These three things point to the great communion that God is in himself. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are together grace, love, and fellowship. This is why God commands us to be like him in grace, love, and fellowship. We are made for this communion because God is this communion. This will then mark the way we act in the world, since we must act in the world as God is in himself and toward the world, to bring about the grace, love, and fellowship that are the hallmarks of the blessed Trinity.

As far as I can tell, three times in the Scriptures we are instructed to be like God, to be as God is. First, *“Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy”* (Lev 19:2); second, *“So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Mt 5:48); and third, *“Be merciful, just as also your Father is merciful”* (Lk 6:36). Be holy; be perfect; be merciful: a trinitarian command. God demonstrates his holiness and perfection by being merciful. The key to our holiness and perfection, then is to be merciful and compassionate, as God himself is *“merciful and gracious, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.”* *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you.”* To you be praise, to you be glory, to you be thanksgiving, O blessed Trinity, forever and ever! Amen.

