

Trinity Sunday 2026
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Rev. 4.1-11 St. John 3.1-14



Trinity Sunday is the Octave Day of Pentecost and commences the second half of the Church Year. The Prayer Book follows the 11th Century Sarum Missal in dating the remaining Sundays of the year after the Feast of the Holy Trinity instead of Pentecost. That doesn't lessen the importance of Pentecost or its connection to Trinity Sunday.

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity states that there is one God who exists as three distinct co-equal, and co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is a temptation among clergy to try to explain the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity in complex theological terms. Trinity Sunday isn't so much about the "what" of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as it is about the "who" of the Holy Trinity and how the Trinity works in our lives.

Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the Doctors of the Church from the late 4th and early 5th centuries, is famous for his explanation of the Trinity as a dynamic love relationship: the Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and the love that flows between them is so perfect and unconditional, he is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Christianity is ultimately about relationships: the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to each other; our relationship to the Trinity; and our relationship to each other. We do not have to fully understand the "how" of the Trinity to see the Trinity at work in our daily lives.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells Nicodemus we must be born again of water and the Holy Spirit to see the Kingdom of God. John the Evangelist records what John the Baptist saw: the Spirit of God like a dove come down on Jesus. Matthew tells us God's voice declared Jesus to be his own unique Son. Jesus' baptism was a Trinitarian event...all three persons of the Trinity were present.

Our relationship to the Trinity and each other begins the moment we are baptized and receive God's life-changing gift of the Holy Spirit. The priest poured water over our heads and baptized us in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. He prayed that having been born again and made part of the Body of Christ, the Church, we would live according to God's will, show our love toward others, and look forward to the day we will see God face to face in heaven.

We invoke the Name of the Trinity throughout the Mass and in the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer. Many of us make the Sign of the Cross...an outward and visible sign that the Trinity is present in our lives. We invoke the Name of the Trinity in the Gloria in Excelsis said or sung at Mass. All of the Collects in the Prayer book talk about the Trinity. We make our Profession of Faith in the Creeds when we say together..."I believe in one God the Father Almighty...And in one Lord, Jesus Christ...And in the Holy Ghost".

The priest absolves people of their sins in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, after the General Confession at Mass and during a Private Confession. He blesses people in the Name of the Trinity at the end of Mass. The Name of the Trinity is invoked in every Sacrament of the Church. At the conclusion of a Requiem Mass, we pray the dead person "sealed with the sign of the Trinity" at his baptism will have everlasting rest and be welcomed into heaven by the Angels and Saints. Baptism and the Requiem Mass are the bookends of our liturgical and spiritual life on earth.

If we take what Augustine said seriously, that the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a relationship of unconditional love, and we get caught up in that love at our baptism, then we have to let that love go to work outside of the Mass. The Holy Trinity works in and through each and every one of us every day of our lives, guiding us, teaching us, blessing us, giving us the right words to say, and increasing our love toward others.

Nicodemus asked Jesus how he would know he was born again. Jesus told him not to worry about the "how" of being born again. He would see the results of his work. We know the wind exists because we see its effects in the world around us. We see trees moving and waves in the ocean. We witness the wind's awesome power.

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity states that there is one God who exists as three distinct co-equal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity isn't a "what" to be explained...the Trinity is a "who" to be experienced. The Trinity is a mystery that defies explanation. But in the words of our closing hymn...it is the mystery we own...which our faith compels us to believe...to be fully revealed to us in heaven.

