

Holy Trinity Sunday

[Reading I: Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22](#)

[Reading II: Romans 8: 14-17](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/052624.cfm>



The church has entered back into Ordinary time. It is the time in which we reflect on the ordinary, everyday ways that we encounter God and recognize God's work in our lives. (The extraordinary seasons of the Incarnation and Death and Resurrection of Jesus are the unordinary ways God has interacted with humanity.)

The first two Sundays in Ordinary time are celebrated with special feasts, Trinity Sunday, and the Body of Christ. Having spent the last 13 Sundays reflecting on Christ's great love in facing persecution and death for our sakes, the church turns to reflect upon whom this God is. This God is the one who desired so much to have a relationship with us even before humanity even sought a relationship with God.

Both the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian scriptures contribute to our understanding of who God is. The bible begins with creation. All that exists is the result of God's action. God desired that creation, including humans, come into being. When Moses asked God's name, God replies, "I am who am," or I be who be (in Hebrew YHWH). This does not tell us very much about God but conveys that for humanity the meaning of our existence is found in God. God is existence. (*For 'In him we live and move and have our being,'* as even some of your poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'* Acts 17:28) These consonants (YHWH) were never spoken in the Jewish tradition. Only the high priest spoke them once a year, asking for God's forgiveness and mercy. The church respects the honor that Jewish people offer these consonants, and we do not use them in public worship.

Moses asks the people to recall all that God has done for them. This includes all of creation, calling Abraham into a relationship, freeing Israel from slavery, feeding them in the desert, hearing the voice of God, and guiding them to the Holy Land. He then challenges them to decide how they will respond. Will they make God the center of their lives and the center of their relationships? Will the ways of God expressed in the commandments, be the guide to their behavior and treatment of one another?

The same questions are asked of us. Looking back on all the blessings, gifts, and opportunities that a person has been given, how does each person respond? No one willed their birth or their family or their place of origin. Everything is gift. Everyone must decide what response they will make to these gifts.

Moses invites the people to learn who God is based on their experience. Three things are presented: God creates, communicates, and delivers. God, the creator, loved and brought forth the world and created human beings. God communicated with and spoke to the people of Israel from Mt Sinai. God chose a people and freed them from slavery in Egypt by working on their behalf with signs and miracles. This God is not distant and aloof. Unlike gods in other traditions, this God is committed to people and desires a relationship with us. In the First Letter of John, God is presented as love. The very nature of God is to love. Loving is a creating dynamic that is always moving toward the more. God creates because that is the nature of God.

The Gospel passage is the Ascension narrative from Matthew. (We read Mark's version two weeks ago.) The passage has four key points. First, when the disciples saw Jesus, they doubted. They had a difficult time trusting that Jesus was risen and with them. So much had happened. Was Jesus really with them? Contemporary believers also have difficulty in believing Jesus is with us in the face of storms, illness, violence, and the breakdown of civil and structural norms. Doubt and uncertainty are not new. The disciples experienced them as well.

Matthew was writing for a primarily Jewish audience who believed that God had given teaching authority to Moses. Jesus presents himself with authority by declaring that he had come not to abolish the law but to fulfill the law in the Sermon on the Mount. He is presented in the Transfiguration in dialogue with Moses and Elijah. Thirdly, Jesus summons them to a mountain (a place where God spoke to Moses and Jesus met with Moses and Elijah) to declare his authority and commission the Apostles to go forth and teach. Jesus has the authority.

From this authority he commissions them to go and make disciples of all nations. The Jewish people believed that they were the only ones to have a special relationship with God. This new commission from Jesus opens the relationship to all humanity and opens anew awareness of Christian relationship with all people. This same commission is addressed to us. By our lives, actions, and words, we are called to help others encounter God and experience the life to which God calls them.

Fourthly, the statement of the formula for baptism (in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit) reaffirms the meaning of human life and activity. Baptism means a plunging into, an immersion into. When one is baptized, one is immersed into the life of the God. One is initiated into the family of God as an identity and as a way of life.

This is one of the places that the Trinity is presented in the New Testament. The formula given here has been the norm for the baptismal formula from the earliest days of Christianity. It is used in most Christian Churches. (Some Pentecostal churches baptize in the name of Jesus [using the phrase from the Acts of the Apostles] and some non-denominational churches use contemporary vocabulary.)

Jesus' final words are: "I am with you always, until the end of the age." Jesus will never abandon us. We can be sure of this in that Jesus' own Spirit is within us and sustains us. If the Holy Spirit is in our lives, God is with us, and as Paul declared, we have become Children of God!

Thus, we celebrate Trinity Sunday, honoring who God is and all that God has done for us. The doctrine of the Trinity holds that God is one in being, one in substance, and one in will. At the same time, God exists in a dynamic of relationships. The three persons are not psychological persons as we experience ourselves and others. There is never a two-to-one vote in the Trinity. They are unique within God, and we encounter God in these unique ways. The Greek word (*perichoresis*) used to describe it is rooted in the word for a circle dance. In the dance, the people are one in the movement, yet to us, they can be experienced uniquely.

In the Letter to the Romans, Paul offers key points about the Christian life. makes four points. In Christ we are transformed. Fr Dennis Hamm, SJ, of Creighton University points out five images of transformation expressed in the Letter to the Romans: "movement from solidarity with Adam to solidarity with Christ, from death to life, from slavery to freedom, from one contract (canceled by death) to a new one, and here from slavery to adopted "sonship."

In the Roman culture, a childless couple desiring an heir would commonly adopt a favored servant. This slave then became a member of the family and stood to receive an inheritance. Paul understands Christians becoming family members and heirs in this way. When one becomes a child of God, one also becomes a sister or brother to Christ and all the members of the Body of Christ. Thus, the Church came to pray to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

This transformation yields the presence of the Holy Spirit by which one establishes that unique relationship with God. For if the Holy Spirit is within us, then God has made us children. We are in a relationship with God and belong to God. Secondly, this is affirmed by the fact that we address God as "Abba" an expression of an intimate relationship with God just like a young child's relationship to parents. It is a close intimate relationship, not a formal nor ceremonial relationship. Thirdly, being a child of God means we are heirs just like Jesus. We are entitled to God's love, care, and attention. We only need to call out to God, and God who loves us will listen. Fourthly, if we are heirs with Christ, we may also need to suffer, for love often involves suffering. When one lives like Jesus, forgiving enemies, helping those in need, we will be laughed at and sometimes used. Suffering comes with loving like Jesus.

Each week at mass, in the Creed, whether the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed, we affirm our belief in God, who is Father, Son, and Spirit, who are one in being and consubstantial. The only difference is how they proceed. The person whom we call Father is the original person. The Father expresses/reveals the divine in the Son, whom St. John calls the "Word." The Spirit proceeds from the relationship of the Father and Son. The "Word" proceeds from the Father and is not created. The Spirit is not created but proceeds from the Father and the Son. The analogy of loving can best describe this proceeding. When one loves another, we express ourselves and pour ourselves out. Thus, the Father who is love in his own substance always loves and is perfectly expressed within the divine. These distinctions are expressed in our readings today.

Themes:

Trinity Nicene and Apostle's Creeds Relationship with God
Mission for each Christian Baptism

Reflection Questions:

How do you experience God or how is God made known to you?

How would you describe your relationship with God?

Who or what is the authority in your life?

To which person of the Trinity do you most relate?

Do you have a sense of mission for your life?

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that our experiences of God will help us recognize God's love, presence, and action in their lives and empower us to faithful service

For the grace of understanding: that we may be more aware of our dignity as daughters and sons of God and of the grace we have received to confidently call God "ABBA"

For a spirit of gratitude: that we may recognize all the wonderful things that God has done for us and with grateful hearts share our blessings with those around us

For greater awareness: that we may recognize how God has brought us from slavery to freedom, from not belonging to being members of God's family, and from death to life

For the gift of courage: that we may be open to moving beyond our ordinary activities and be instruments of God's love and presence in new situations and amongst new people