

Devotions for the Festival of the Trinity – June 1-5, 2026

Monday of the Festival of Trinity – Prayer for the Week

Almighty and everlasting God, 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. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign one God, now and forever.

Were you ever one of those kids who eagerly tore open a Christmas or birthday gift only to discover something which disappointed you? Did some practically minded relative give you underwear or socks for Christmas? Did you utter a half-hearted “thanks” under the glowering expectation of your mother? Or was she the one who gave you the practical gift?

The prayer speaks of God giving us the gift to acknowledge the Trinity and worship the Unity. I think a lot of Christians might wonder about the value of that gift, especially if they attend one of those churches which use the Athanasian Creed on Trinity Sunday. But Christians should and do rejoice in the revelation of God to us that is Trinity. Yes, it is rather difficult to describe and impossible to understand; however, Trinity stands at the very heart of what we believe. The Trinity is nothing less than the Father sending the Son to die for our sins. The Son obeying the Father and redeeming the world. The Holy Spirit poured out upon us in baptism. Without Trinity we cannot really speak of those things which are the very acts of salvation.

I do not expect God to be easy to understand. In fact, I get rather suspicious of what I am saying when the answers to the God questions get simple and easy. That usually means I am off the mark. God has in Christ revealed something of the profound mystery which created this universe, including me. I thank God that I can see therein the love of God which gave his Son, the loving obedience of that Son, and the love which poured out that Spirit. It is very good to acknowledge the Trinity and worship the Unity. It allows me to reflect upon the mystery of the cross. Spend a few moments thinking about that. God the Son died there for you. God the Father raised him from the dead. God the Holy Spirit, poured out on Pentecost and in your baptism into this triune Name, calls you into faith. You can say all that because of Trinity.

Tuesday of the Festival of Trinity – Genesis 1:1-2:4

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God

called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree

with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

¹Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

Some years ago, I was served by a dentist who attended another Lutheran parish. He told me the story of the Sunday his congregation held an outdoor service in a local park. At the last minute, the pastor tapped my dentist friend to be the scripture reader and assigned him to read Genesis 1:1-12. The bulletin, however, had a typographical error and listed the reading as "Genesis 1-12." My friend thought it a little long but it was an unusual service and so he opened his Bible and started reading. He was well into chapter 2 before the pastor put his hand on his shoulder and said, "That's enough, Bob."

These words of Genesis have been much discussed by Christians for many years. Did you know that Augustine wrote no less than 5 different works dedicated to explaining these verses? He did that because the debate about the meaning of these words was raging many years ago, far earlier than Darwin's Theory of Evolution. The result of all this is that too often people have allowed the disagreement to obscure what the creation narrative is saying to us. Genesis 1 tells us that God has made the universe. Our very existence depends on him. He loves us and delights in us. As the Creator He gets to make the rules which define our lives and has every right to hold us accountable to those rules. Our human nature rebels at that truth and wants to hide from it. We would like to think that we own ourselves and we deceive ourselves into imagining that freedom is when we get to do what we want.

The truth is far better. God is the one who puts his hand on our individual shoulders and says, "that's enough." We derive our being from Him, and He is the goal of every life. As the psalmist says he completely encompasses us. I do not need to figure out the answers to all the questions. God has the whole universe in his hands. Read Psalm 139 after you have read this text. The Psalmist, I think, has deeply understood what Genesis 1 has to say.

Wednesday of the Festival of Trinity – Psalm 8

¹O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

² Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
⁴what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
⁶You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
⁷all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
⁸the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
⁹O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

The Psalter is a strange and mysterious book. It often confounds us. How do the prayers of ancient believers become the Word of God to me? The psalter is divided into five sections. The first two psalms seem to form an introduction. That would make this psalm the sixth psalm in the first section. If you go to the last section of the psalter and count in six psalms from the end you will come to Psalm 144. In that psalm you will find that it asks this very same question, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" It gives a slightly different answer. Why has the Spirit of God moved things this way? Why does this question serve as a sort of bookend to the whole psalter? I have no idea.

We find ourselves in the week of Trinity, a time when we contemplate great mysteries of the faith and wonder at the very nature of God. It is a week of many questions and not very many answers. We might find that disturbing. We would very much like some answers. Our world is regularly convulsed by sin, our reaction to sin, and the lingering after-effects of our reactions to sin. We saw that play out in the recent pandemic and continue to feel the effects of that time. For the traumatized portions of our society, it might still feel like an ongoing nightmare. What is a man or woman that God would be mindful of us? We seem to be subject to impersonal forces like disease, economics, and others. We might even begin to wonder if God does have us in mind at all. The psalmist looked up to the stars of heaven and felt very small and wondered what God had in mind. Could God's attention be upon a solitary Israelite staring into the Milky Way? Why would God care about us? Yet, the psalmist goes on to say, God has cared and made us little lower than the angels and crowned us with glory and honor.

I cannot speak to why God should love his creation so much that he would take up our human nature in order to suffer and die for our sins and be raised for our justification. I can only attest that he has done just that. With the psalmist I can say that God's name is indeed majestic because he has saved me. Say it with him today. You are in God's hands. He establishes his strength in strange ways, even out of the mouths of children, even out of your mouth.

Thursday of the Festival of Trinity – Acts 2:14a, 22-36

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:

²²"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.²⁵For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.
²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,
³⁵until I make your enemies your footstool.'

³⁶Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

This is the week of the observance of Trinity, the doctrine which was articulated at the council of Nicea in 325 AD. People had been talking this way for some time, but there was disagreement leading up to this meeting of the leaders of Christendom. At Nicea they agreed to talk about Trinity the way we continue to talk about it, in the words of the Nicene Creed. But talking about something and understanding it are two different things. The Christians who articulated Trinity all admitted that God was simply too big to fit into our minds. We could only describe what we see. We could not define or explain it.

This passage which we find in Acts 2 was integral to that description. We find all three members of the Trinity here. God the Father attested to Jesus' status through mighty deeds and especially by raising him from the dead. Jesus, for his part, was obedient to death, was crucified, died, buried. It was not the Father who died, but the Son. The Father raised the Son to life. Peter bears witness to it. And now the Holy Spirit is poured out manifesting in the tongues of flame and the languages proclaimed. The Father

and the Son were not poured out that day, but the Spirit. Peter spoke these words on that first Christian Pentecost Day.

I have been preaching sermons and thinking about Trinity for nearly 30 years. I have taught university level courses on the formation of the doctrine of the trinity. I still cannot explain the trinity to you. I can only describe it. The Father sent the Son. The Son obeyed, suffered, died, and rose again. The Holy Spirit, poured out on each of us in Baptism, connects us to what Christ has done. I do not understand but I confess what Peter proclaimed to be so. By the strange workings of this Three-in-One God the salvation of the world, including you and me, has transpired. Praise God for the Trinity.

Friday of the Festival of Trinity – Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

My father was a bit of a restless person. Even in retirement he could not sit still. He was serving a congregation and preaching throughout his retirement right up until the brief illness which took his life some years ago. He sometimes joked that he was addicted to preaching. He could not stop.

There is something of that same restlessness to this passage which we hear in the week of Trinity. We have it this week because it mentions the three persons of the Trinity and because we recite it at every baptism. I love this passage, however, because it will not let Trinity be static, a box we check off and leave alone. Trinity is all tied up with the disciple-making Church. The very act of making disciples, the baptizing and teaching is intricately associated with Trinity. It is the work of this triune God. God is not just there, present like some piece of furniture standing in the corner of my room; the Triune God does something. We proclaim the Triune God – the sending Father, the obedient, dying, rising Son, the Spirit who makes us holy. We teach these things. When one becomes a Christian one is brought into that name of God.

Right now, it feels like the Church has come to a stop or might be retreating in this world. That is likely a perception borne of our location more than a fact, but the perception is real. I hear these words and I know that God is restless, always seeking some way to reach the lost man or woman. Not too long ago the Surgeon General of the United States declared loneliness a health emergency. I sometimes wonder if the recent pandemic was not an opportunity for our God to shake up our churches, to get us out of our set ways and to impel us back into the lives of the people around us. We offer them the very sort of community which the experts are telling us lies at the heart of health and well-being. Is Jesus laying the groundwork for a revival of the church through its community? People flocked to Jesus because He offered them healing. God has not stopped caring for the lost. He is still reaching out to them. How does he do that through your life in these days? These are the last words in the Gospel according to Matthew. He put them there because he wants us to remember this. Pray a prayer that this work of God takes shapes in your life.