

HOLY TRINITY  
SUNDAY

YEAR A



FIRST READING  
Exodus 34:4–6, 8–9

PSALM

Daniel 3:52–55

SECOND READING  
2 Corinthians 13:11–13

GOSPEL

John 3:16–18

**Prayer**

*Daniel 3:52–55*

“Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and to be praised and highly exalted forever;

And blessed is your glorious, holy name, and to be highly praised and highly exalted forever.

Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory, and to be extolled and highly glorified forever.

Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne on the cherubim, and to be praised and highly exalted forever.

Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, and to be extolled and highly exalted forever.

**Reading the Word**

*Exodus 34:4–6, 8–9*

So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the former

ones; and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone. The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, “The LORD.” The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed,

“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. He said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”

*2 Corinthians 13:11–13*

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree

with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

*John 3:16–18*

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

*Scripture quotations from  
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## Hearing the Word

### “Immeasurable Love”

Taking place on the first Sunday after Pentecost, the celebration of the Holy Trinity contains a kind of summary of the mystery of God, of God's nature and character. The biblical passages that speak explicitly about all three persons of the Holy Trinity together are rather rare, with Matthew's statement in Matt 28:19 – “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” – being perhaps the best known and cited. Today's liturgy, however, chooses to draw attention to the “inner character” or “nature” of the Triune God, to something that unites the three persons in perfect communion, namely God's immeasurable love for the people.

The first reading depicts Moses presenting himself before God with the second set of the “tablets of stone”. Moses had first received “two tablets of Testimony” on Mount Sinai (Exod 32:15-16). They were a sign of the covenant which God chose to make with Israel, and they contained essential stipulations, of the Law of the Covenant. Yet, the people immediately broke this covenant despite their prior solemn declaration that, “everything that the LORD has spoken we will do” (Exod 19:8). Moses, returning to the camp with the first set of the tablets, found his people worshipping the golden calf with song and dancing. In a symbolic gesture, Moses smashed the tablets, signifying by this act that the Covenant has been broken and annulled. The people's

act of idolatry threatened to destroy them, as it constituted a brazen demonstration of their indifference and disregard for the Lord, who had saved them from certain death in Egypt.

Moses, always the good leader, destroyed the golden calf and sought God's forgiveness for the faithless nation. A renewal of the covenant was required to secure the Lord's continuing guidance and protection on the way to the promised land. For this reason, Moses approached God again with ardent intercession and pleas for the faithless nation. In a dialogue with God, Moses evoked God's earlier choice of the nation and his faithfulness. In response God disclosed to Moses something about his own nature stating that he is, “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”

Reassured by such magnanimity of God's heart, Moses did not hesitate to ask for forgiveness, and renewed adoption of the faithless nation as God's own people. A sign of this forgiveness and God's decision not to renounce his people was manifested by a command that Moses cuts a second set of the tablets and presents them to the Lord. The covenant has been saved and renewed. This could have happened only because God's faithfulness and mercy completely overshadows human treachery, stubbornness and sinfulness.

The second reading contains the closing lines of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. This letter comes from a

very troubled and turbulent phase of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian community. Even though Paul brought them the gift of faith, the Corinthians disowned him, preferring more appealing leaders and apostles. Yet, Paul did not disown them. His words show deep inner affection for those who caused him numerous troubles.

In his letter, Paul shared much about the difficulties and sufferings he endured for the sake of the Gospel, and for the Corinthian's sake. Keenly aware of his personal weakness and placing his confidence in Christ, Paul chose not to be discouraged by the rejection and judgement of other people. He even declared that “we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong” (2 Cor 13:9). These words demonstrate his utter love and unwavering commitment even to an unfaithful community. He acted towards them in much the same manner as God did towards the Israelites.

This was also a very divided community, riddled with rivalries, conflicts, unhealthy competition and internal strife. For this reason, Paul concluded the letter with a final plea and a recommendation to strive for unity and harmony rather than strive with one another. He wished “the God of love and peace” be with them.

His final words contain the “Trinitarian salutation” which Christians use until today – “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” These words contain more than just a prayer-

ful wish. This is, in fact, a summary of the entire Christian life. This is so because “God’s love”, made known to all in Jesus Christ, “has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). Thus, the life of those reborn in baptism is sustained by actions of all three persons of the Holy Trinity. It is a work of God’s love, manifested through Jesus’ death, which is continually being diffused into the world by the Holy Spirit, who brings believers into fellowship with God. The three persons of the Trinity, bound by love, and giving love, work together towards one purpose: to ensure the salvation of the faithful.

Birth “from above” is the topic of the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus reported in John’s Gospel. Nicodemus’ difficulty in understanding the phrase “to be born from above”, gives Jesus an opportunity to explain his mission in the world. He utters one of the most significant and revealing truths about God and God’s purposes: “For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” God’s love for humanity is best made visible in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. This act expresses God’s highest love because Jesus gives everything in order to open the way to eternal life for those who believe in him.

Participation in this “eternal life” is not limited to life after death. John thinks of eternal life as something that takes place already on this earth, in the lives of those who, through

faith in Jesus, enter into communion with God, a communion which will continue into eternity. Not even death can break this bond between God and the faithful.

The second part of the Gospel passage considers judgment and condemnation. How do these acts of God correspond to God’s love? For John, judgment takes place through a person’s decision “for” or “against” Jesus. God condemns no one, and he did not send his Son into the world as a judge bent on condemnation. Accepting Jesus in faith brings salvation, refusing to believe brings condemnation. God does not judge, God loves. A person judges himself or herself through a free choice to either accept or reject God’s love manifested in Jesus. And such a choice has eternal consequences.

Holy Trinity Sunday offers a deeper insight into the very nature of God. It affirms that God, from the very beginning of history, accompanied human beings and acted with merciful love, shown in forgiveness, and continuing commitment to the people of Israel, even after they had broken his covenant. Paul addressed the troublesome Corinthians pleading for unity and harmony, and, above all, for love which binds the three persons of the Trinity in a single purpose: salvation of believers. John’s Gospel makes God’s nature and intentions explicit; the inner love within the Trinity resulted in Jesus’s coming into the world in order to bring salvation to all who choose to believe in him. Today’s lit-

urgy proclaims that love for humanity lies at the core of God’s very nature. Contemplation of his overabundant love invites Christians to a response of faith and rejoicing, chiming with the words of the prophet Daniel, “Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and to be praised and highly exalted forever”.

### **Listening to the Word of God**

“Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” These words of Pope Benedict XVI imply that the experience of God, Three and One, is at the root of all Christian discipleship. Without acknowledging that God enters into a relationship with humanity the celebration of the solemnity of the Trinity would run the risk of becoming an abstract, intellectual commemoration. It is, therefore, important to bear in mind that the doctrine of the Trinity did not arise out of philosophical speculation, but rather, according to Benedict XVI, “developed out of the effort to digest historical experiences”. From this emanates the fact that faith in the Trinity must be a part and parcel of our daily life.

Our relationship with each of the three persons should be considered in reference to our concrete reality. Following the analogy of Saint Augustine, since we are pleased to call God our Father, any human person in spite of his/her cultural, ethnic, religious, racial, political, social identity is our brother or our sister. In this sense, addressing and acknowledging God as

Father translates into seeing all people as our brothers and sisters.

Since Jesus, our savior, saves and redeems, to identify with him means an acceptance to be like him and act as “saviors” to those who are in need of any help – the poor, the marginalized, the sick, the lonely, the hopeless, the addicted ones, etc. As for Jesus, charity in truth and non-violence are to be the tools in bringing salvation to the world.

In the creed, we profess that the Spirit is “the Lord and giver of Life”. This implies that since our whole being belongs to Him as Lord, we stand with him to eradicate all that weakens or negates life. What works against life is sometimes called the “structures of sins” or a “culture of death”. While many in our society, youth in particular, sometimes in critical situations, opt for prostitution, abortion, suicide, armed-robbery etc., those who live in the Spirit are called to counterbalance those life-destroying attitudes by a Spirit-guided life focus.

To be a Christian does not simply mean to pronounce the right words and have correct beliefs. It means to live a life of faith which springs forth from the experience of the Trinity. Since the belief in the Trinity lies at the heart of the Christian faith, it calls upon us as Christians to adopt a way of life which reflects our unique faith. This means that each one of us, as a disciple of Jesus, is in fact, a herald of the overabundant love which the three divine persons share among themselves and which they show to all humanity. Love is to be shared. After experiencing a merciful, faithful God who always forgives and bestows life,

we cannot keep that grace for ourselves. Encountering God in Jesus we become those whom God wants to use in order to reach others. We are not only stewards of His grace, but above all His messengers. Otherwise, we do not know God, nor do we deserve to be called Christians.

### Proverb

“If one finger tries to pick up something from the ground, it cannot.”

### Action

#### Self-examination

Do I live the experience of the Trinity in my life? In what ways?

Do I make decisions reflecting on which course of action would reflect the Trinity’s focus on salvation of humankind in my life and in the world? Give examples.

## Response to God

I need to live the experience of the Trinity in all my endeavors. I pray to God for strength to live the inner love within the Trinity daily.

## Response to your World

I think of a practice or action which I can introduce into my daily habits so that God’s inner love within the Trinity can shine through me.

As a community, we identify one particular action that reflects what each person of the Trinity does. We choose one of them and define ways to implement it in your environment.

### Prayer

Blessed Trinity, I praise you: Father all-powerful, Christ Lord and Saviour, Spirit of love, You reveal yourself in the depth of our being, drawing us to share in your life and your love. One God, in three Persons, be near to me formed in your image and be close to the world your love brings to life. Give me strength to achieve the fullness of our human dignity, which is participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity, lovingly united with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and with all people in the unity of the Trinity. Amen,

*(Prayer of the Divine Word Missionaries, SVD)*

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