

HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY:

June 15, 2025

It is said that Saint Francis of Assisi ended each day with this prayer, “Who are you, God?” and then also said, “Who am I, God?” Who are you, God; who am I, God? Two simple questions but life and faith teaches us that we can’t answer one of these questions without also knowing the answer to the other. But it takes a lifetime, maybe more, to really answer such questions.

Our sacred scriptures, both the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian scriptures, say that God has revealed God’s own Self to us human beings. Christianity is demanding and confusing when it proclaims a three-in-one God. We cannot really make sense of it as we understand reality from our own human experiences.

I have learned that I can most make sense of a Triune God if I look first at the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is said to be the most unknown and neglected member of the Trinity but I would say it is the closest, most real evidence of God. Thomas Merton once wrote that each of us has, in the depths of our being, a spirit that we cannot naturally access. It is there and we know of it through experience but we can’t control it. It is our True Self. I know there is something beyond me that is within me when I write or speak, for I bring forth something unknown to my rational mind. Where did that come from, I ask myself? Movements of love, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering all come from this Spirit. I know that Spirit is within me. Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit and said the Spirit will remind us of all that Jesus taught. Jesus is the human face of God and we learn much about God when we take Jesus’ humanity seriously. Jesus was a prophet in the line of the Hebrew prophets. To understand Jesus we must know the prophets and all of the Hebrew scriptures. Jesus was a teacher and a healer.

To come to realize that Jesus is God, we examine his humanity – his words, his actions, his love, his emptying of himself for our sakes. If we too quickly honor him as God, then we insert our own notions of God instead of taking Jesus’ humanity seriously. It took over 300 years for the early church to clarify this belief, in its controversy with Arius and other theologians, who did not see Jesus as God. Seventeen hundred years ago the Council of Nicaea declared Jesus was God, consubstantial with the Father.

Yes, then there is Father, the first of the Trinity. When the scriptures simply say God, they usually mean the Father. When we behold the painting of the creation of Adam by God on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, we see how our notions of God have been shaped. In that painting God is pictured as an old man with a long

white beard. That is how we have mostly pictured God. But God is Spirit, not flesh, and father is just a metaphor for this ultimate depth of all reality. We can also call God Mother though Jesus called God his Abba, an intimate word for Daddy. But, as we grow in faith, we get beyond all images and know this God is pure mystery, image-less, darkness, eternal abyss. This God is the Creator of the cosmos, the Depth of all reality, beyond spirit and flesh, spiritual and material. This God can be scary to us and that is perhaps why Jesus called God Abba, Father. This God is intimate, close, relational, in fact is Love.

Greek philosophy was used to define the Trinity. We speak of three divine persons. But person in Greek did not mean individual. God is three relationships, this God is an eternal dance, this God is so intimate and relational that three different faces of God are really One God. That is the great mystery beyond our images and concepts. Yet we are told that we human beings have been made in the image of this God. We are relational by our nature, we are made to love, to empty ourselves and give ourselves to others.

Other religions, particularly in the East, have had many gods to express what we believe in a Triune God, or no God to get beyond our limited images. Seventy years ago, at the time of the Vatican Council, the great Jesuit theologian, Karl Rahner, proposed that we do not use the word “God” for fifty years and come to acknowledge the mystery that is God. This mystery embraces us, loves us and teaches us how to love.

Let us acknowledge this great mystery, the Spirit, stirring within us and guiding us along the way. Let us acknowledge this great mystery in the incarnate Savior of Galilee, through whom all creation has been made. And let us acknowledge the wonderful, beautiful mystery in whom we live and move and have our being, to whom we offer this Eucharist as we come together in the name of Jesus and are empowered by the Spirit to believe and offer ourselves. “Through Christ and in Christ and with Christ, in the unity of the holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, creator God, forever and ever.” Amen.

Glory be to the father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen

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