

## Trinity Sunday - Comments/questions on the lessons for May 31, 2026

### Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a

- Genesis has two – very different – creation stories. The second one starts immediately after this passage. For all those in churches who have gotten mixed up in the creation/evolution debate, they have failed to notice that Genesis does not give a consistent picture on the creation of the world nor have they explored what each creation story is trying to communicate. Here are a few distinct differences between the two stories:

<i>Where is the passage located?</i>	Genesis 1	Genesis 2-3
<i>How long is creation?</i>	6 days (7 <sup>th</sup> for rest)	One day
<i>How did God create?</i>	By the word	By hand
<i>When were humans created?</i>	Last, after everything else	First, before plants and animals
<i>How were humans created?</i>	By a word and together (man and woman)	By hand and separate (first man)
<i>What is the name of God?</i>	Elohim (God)	YHWH (The LORD)
<i>What is the purpose of the passage?</i>	Creation is good, Sabbath is important	Sin is a part of our origin

- So why is this passage used for Trinity Sunday? For probably (at least) three different reasons:
  - Genesis 1:2 mentions “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” The word for “wind” is the same word for “spirit,” so that many in church history see in this verse a reference to the Holy Spirit.
  - In this first creation story, God does not create anything by hand. God merely speaks, and it happens – “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” (1:3) Philo, a Jewish philosopher at the time of Jesus, thus saw God’s speech, God’s word, as a separate entity that formed the world. The “word” of God as a separate entity may very well lie behind the Gospel of John naming Jesus as the Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1) Thus, the creation story is used, interpreting Jesus as that Word that created the world.
  - Many have seen a reference to the Trinity – or at least a community – within God, when God declares at the creation of humanity: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.” (1:26)
- If indeed we have a reference to the Trinity and community within God when God creates humanity, what does it mean that we are created in that image? We are created not as individuals but as a community. What does that mean or say in this time of conflict and division we find ourselves in?

### Psalm 8

- Why is this psalm used for Trinity Sunday? It likely is used on this day because the early church saw Christ within this psalm. Hebrews, for example, uses it to say that the psalm must be speaking about Jesus:
 

*Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere,*

*‘What [is man] that you are mindful of [him],*

*or [the son of man], that you care for [him]?’*

*You have made [him] for a little while lower than the angels;*

*you have crowned [him] with glory and honor,*

*subjecting all things under [him] feet.’*

*Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.(Hebrews 2:5-9)*

- Despite that use in the early church, the psalm itself expresses a wonder about human beings, who have been given such control over all things. Though God is great beyond measure, God made humanity only a bit lower than the angels and entrusted us with the responsibility over all of creation. I think of the Spiderman line: With great power comes great responsibility. How are we doing with that responsibility? What can we do to encourage one another to greater responsibility?

## 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

- These are the closing words of Paul’s letter. It is included in our passages for Trinity Sunday, because of the benediction it concludes with: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” These words sound familiar as they are used to open our worship service. Though it will take a few centuries to flesh out what this might all mean when we speak about God, this blessing guides us by what it says about God and how we are grounded in God, for each aspect of God has a quality associated with it: grace, love, and communion/community. How do we ground ourselves in grace, love, and community? What does that mean?
- In light of all that we are going through as a nation and world, what does it mean to “live in peace”?

## Matthew 28:16-20

- Once again, we include this passage for Trinity Sunday as Jesus commands the disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” What this would have meant to the disciples at that time – and even to the community that Matthew writes to – is unclear as the concept of the Trinity would not be worked out for some time after this.
- But perhaps the passage indicates that understanding is not essential for discipleship. When Jesus encounters the disciples, the passage reads, “they worshiped him; but some doubted.” Indeed, the literal translation of the words would be “and they doubted.” Yet, Jesus does not dwell on the doubt. Jesus tells them to “Go.” We may doubt, but we still move forward. We may not understand, but we still baptize, we still teach. Thus, I share these words as a closing prayer for us from Thomas Merton:

*My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think I am following your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore will I trust you always though  
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

## *The Trinity in stages*

*First known use of the term Trinity:*

*Theophilus of Antioch (died around 184)  
– referred to the Trinity as God, God's Word, and God's Wisdom*

*First known defense of the doctrine of Trinity: Tertullian around 205*

### Who is God the Father?

*The Marcionite controversy: Is there one God? How could a good God create such a messed-up world?*

*Answer:*

**Apostle's Creed:** I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

**Nicene Creed (325, 381):** We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

### Who was God the Son?

*Part 1: The Arian controversy: Was Jesus fully God?*

*Answer:*

**Apostles' Creed:** I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

*[But what does that mean? How is Jesus God's Son? So ...]*

**Nicene Creed:** We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, ....

*Part 2: How was Jesus both God and human?*

*Answer:*



### **Athanasian Creed (Late 5<sup>th</sup> – Early 6<sup>th</sup> century):**

It is necessary for eternal salvation that one also faithfully believe

that our Lord Jesus became flesh.

For this is the true faith that we believe and confess:

That our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man.

He is God, begotten before all worlds from the being of the Father,

and he is man, born in the world from the being of his mother—

existing fully as God,

and fully as man

with a rational soul and a human body;

equal to the Father in divinity,

subordinate to the Father in humanity.

Although he is God and man,

he is not divided,

but is one Christ.

He is united because God

has taken humanity into himself;

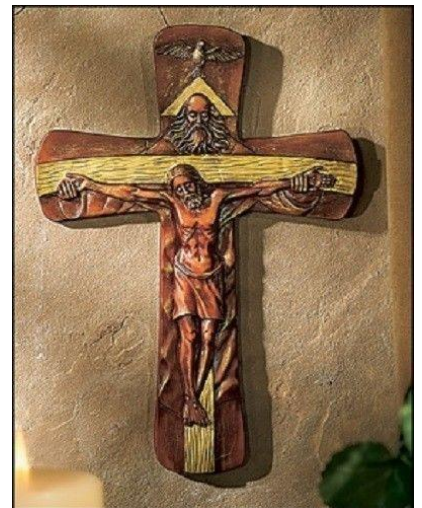
he does not transform deity into humanity.

He is completely one in the unity of his person,

without confusing his natures.

For as the rational soul and body are one person,

so the one Christ is God and man.



Finally, who is God the Holy Spirit?

**Apostles' Creed:** I believe in the Holy Spirit, ...  
*[Okay, but what does that mean??]*

**Nicene Creed:**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son. *[Or is it "through the Son"??]*  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.

**The Macedonian controversy: Is the Spirit God like Jesus is God? Or not?**



**Answer (?):**

**Athanasian Creed:**

Thus the Father is God;  
the Son is God;  
the Holy Spirit is God:  
And yet there are not three gods,  
but one God.

Thus the Father is Lord;  
the Son is Lord;  
the Holy Spirit is Lord:  
And yet there are not three lords,  
but one Lord.

As Christian truth compels us to acknowledge  
each distinct person as God and Lord,  
so catholic religion forbids us  
to say that there are three gods or lords.

The Father was neither made  
nor created nor begotten;  
the Son was neither made nor created,  
but was alone begotten of the Father;  
the Spirit was neither made nor created,  
but is proceeding from the Father and the Son.

Thus there is one Father, not three fathers;  
one Son, not three sons;  
one Holy Spirit, not three spirits.

And in this Trinity, no one is before or after,  
greater or less than the other;  
but all three persons are in themselves, coeternal and coequal;  
and so we must worship the Trinity in unity  
and the one God in three persons.

Whoever wants to be saved should think thus about the Trinity.

