

Homily for the Most Holy Trinity, Year A

May 31, 2026

St. Bavo Parish

Rev. Peter J. Pacini, C.S.C.

First Reading: Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9 (The Lord proclaims his mercy, kindness and fidelity to Moses.)

Responsory: Daniel 3:52-55 (Glory and praise forever!)

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 (Paul concludes his letter with a Trinitarian blessing.)

Gospel: John 3:16-18 (God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to save us.)

We believe God to be a perfect communion of three Divine Persons — united in *substance*, united in *will*, and bound by *love*, yet distinct from one another. That's our understanding when we refer to God as a "Holy Trinity." We hold this concept of God to be true not because human beings were so clever that they could probe the Mystery of God and discover what God wished to keep hidden. No, we believe in the Most Holy Trinity because God *chose to reveal* that which we never could have discovered by human reason alone. However, this Mystery is so great that it could not be revealed all at once. Instead, God has made himself known to human beings over a period of centuries, gradually enlightening his faithful people, who yearn to know the source of our being and the source of all that exists.

We're not going to find the dogma of the Holy Trinity explained anywhere in the Scriptures, for one simple reason. The latest books in the Bible were written long before the Church developed the necessary philosophical and theological terminology to *express* what we have come to believe about God's nature. Still, the *roots* of our belief can certainly be found in the Scriptures. In fact, the readings today reflect a developing knowledge of God, enabled by God's *gradual* self-revelation to his people.

The oldest reading that we heard today comes from the Book of Exodus. At this very early stage of salvation history, roughly 1200 B.C., the Israelites barely knew the God who had saved them from oppression and slavery in Egypt. God claimed them as his own and proclaimed himself to be the God of their Patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yet, they knew virtually *nothing* about God or his divine will. What did this all-powerful God want from them? *The Law*, given to them through Moses, would partially answer that question. God's commandments would provide guidelines for moral behavior and rituals by which to worship God and seek his favor. And the Law would form the basis of their covenant with God.

The very first commandment contained the most important revelation up to that point, namely, that there is *only one true God*. However, the Law also demonstrated God's concern for *justice and righteousness*, as well as his boundless capacity for *mercy*. To Moses the Lord proclaimed himself to be "merciful and gracious... slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity." Thus, the Law was an important *beginning*, a first step toward a genuine *knowledge of God*. The Prophets would continue this revelation throughout the Old Testament period. God would speak to his people through them, to correct their behavior, to comfort them in their suffering, and to remind them of all that he had already revealed to them. But, by the first century A.D., there was still much about God that remained not only *unknown*, but also

unknowable. Then God found a truly extraordinary way to reveal much more, by becoming *incarnate* as a human being.

Jesus Christ, the Divine Son, has shown us the “human face of God.” In other words, through his teachings and his actions, he has revealed God in terms that human beings can understand. Previously, God’s love and mercy had seemed like abstract concepts. But *Christ’s love* and *Christ’s mercy* are very concrete. We can see them displayed in countless Gospel passages and hear Jesus explain them to his disciples. Jesus truly pulled back the curtain to show God to his people as they had never seen him before.

Today’s gospel reading provides perhaps the most important revelation of all, namely, God’s intentions for the salvation of the whole human race: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life.” Until Jesus, it was not at all clear that God wished to save all of us. Until Jesus died on the cross, it was *unfathomable* that the Almighty God would sacrifice so much in order to save us mere human beings from eternal death. Jesus revealed the Father’s desire to condemn *no one*, but to save all those who believe in him.

The revelation of the Son totally transformed our understanding of God. The gift of the *Holy Spirit* would totally transform how believers experience God’s *presence*. Last week, on the Feast of Pentecost, we pondered the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our Church. Today St. Paul concludes his Second Letter to the Corinthians with a blessing that mentions “the *fellowship* of the Holy Spirit,” suggesting that this third Person of the Most Holy Trinity can be our close friend and companion. And that *is* how many of us experience the Holy Spirit. Even though we can more easily *picture* Jesus or the Father in our imagination, calling upon traditional images from sacred art, the Holy Spirit often seems closer at hand. Its divine power seems to touch our lives virtually *every day*.

Countless Christians throughout the centuries have come to know God through their personal encounters with *all three Persons* of the Most Holy Trinity. Sometimes God seems more like a heavenly Father, taking care of us and providing for our needs. Other times, we can relate to God better through his incarnate form, Jesus of Nazareth, the one who is like us in all things except sin. Other times, we feel God’s power working in us through the Holy Spirit, perhaps by a burst of inspiration, a sudden insight, or an urge to reach out to a person in need. Over time, these *varied* experiences of the *One God* have convinced us that God is, in fact, a *Holy Trinity* — three divine persons, who interact with us in different ways, but are undoubtedly the same God.

These personal encounters with the Divine have formed our minds and hearts, as well as the doctrine of the Church, in the *Truth*. They suggest rather strongly that God wants to be *known and loved*, not just feared and worshiped. God, our Creator, graciously chooses *to show himself to us*, for he considers us his *beloved children*. Thankfully, over time, God has discovered numerous ways to draw close to his people and let us “see his face.” That process of revelation began with early glimpses granted to the Patriarchs, developed further through the Law and the Prophets, then made a *huge leap* forward with Jesus of Nazareth, and continues, even today, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us give thanks and praise to God for the gift of this revelation. And let us constantly seek to know and love him more completely as *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* — one God in three Persons.