

# Read

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

John 3:16-18

## LIVING THE WORD

# Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

June 4, 2023



## REFLECTION

The Gospel reading for this Sunday is a distillation of the entire Gospel message. In a handful of lines, John summarizes the truth of God's love for us and the gift of salvation offered by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. This is the Good News!

Often we struggle with feeling unlovable and worthless. We think we need to be perfect to deserve love, and that can send us into egotistical denial of our faults or depression and despair when we come face to face with our sins and limitations. We long for someone to love us as we are, but the broken, imperfect people in our lives cannot satisfy our hunger for a love that never falters and never fails. The earth is filled with the walking wounded, waiting for someone to prove they can love us as we are before we trust them with our hearts in return.

Good news! God already loves you in all your brokenness (Romans 5:6-8). Jesus knew our hardness of heart and still died for love of each one of us. This is the love your heart longs for. What are you waiting for?



## ACTION

Listen to the choral piece linked below, or simply find a quiet place and read this week's Gospel over to yourself slowly, one line at a time. Let the words sink in as a personal message from God to you. God loves you so much that he sent Jesus to live and die so that you would live with him forever. God knows your faults, sins, and failures perfectly and completely, and still loves you enough to die for you.



**"God So Loved the World"**  
—composed by John Stainer  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_14CpHBRd3k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_14CpHBRd3k)



## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you treat yourself when you feel unlovable and unworthy? How do you treat other people?
- ❖ What is the difference between the sacrificial love described in the Gospel and the many ways we see love depicted in popular media?



# Introduction to **ORDINARY TIME** during Spring and Summer



## The Season

The Gospel accounts in Ordinary Time during the spring and summer draw us deeply into the life of God and the life of the Christian disciple. Ordinary Time resumes following the fifty-day season of Easter Time, with the solemnities of the Most Holy Trinity and the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi). These pivotal Sundays focus our attention on the inner life of God as we can perceive it, and the impact this life is to have on our lives as we encounter Christ's self-giving love in the Eucharist. Reflecting on these mysteries is a fitting way to transition into Ordinary Time, in which we explore the demands of discipleship and the impact a life of discipleship is to have on us and on all whom we touch.

In these weeks of Ordinary Time, we hear familiar stories of people who encounter Christ, and we are asked to consider how the people we meet may encounter Christ through us. This is an eternal story of the ongoing life of the Church, and a story that is very personal for each of us. Our regular reflection on the Sunday Gospel accounts helps us remember that our call is not a once-and-done but rather an always-and-everywhere invitation to live as Christ's people. Our reflections each week encourage us to consider the circumstances of our lives, the lives of people whom we know and those whom we do not, and how Christ's love, forgiveness, mercy, and compassion will have a lasting impact on us all. These reflections help us remember that while Ordinary Time is time that is counted, it is never ordinary, since the life of the disciple is anything but that!

## Celebrating Ordinary Time during Spring and Summer with Teens

The weeks following Easter are often filled with special moments in the lives of teenagers: dances and social gatherings; graduations and plans for life beyond junior high or high school; awards recognition and the close of spring athletic teams; summer plans. Giving Sunday Mass and the Gospel the priority they deserve may be a challenge for some of the teens in this time of the year. Be aware of the many things vying for their attention, and encourage them to prioritize their time well. Acknowledge the youth's presence at Mass and your gatherings as a sign of their commitment to Christ.

## Preparing the Liturgical Environment

The green of Ordinary Time returns with this season and mirrors the green and new life of spring. Include in your prayer environment various shades of green, along with a lectionary or book of the Gospels, open to the Gospel for Sunday. Consider establishing an environment that has elements that the teens may take with them as you conclude your sessions for the summer, such as small flowers, personal crucifixes, or holy cards.





June 4, 2023

# SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

## LECTIONARY #164A

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

John 3:16-18

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Today's famous Gospel passage comes at the end of a conversation between Jesus and the Jewish leader Nicodemus. Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night to learn from him. Jesus tells him that all believers must be born again, from water and spirit. This confuses Nicodemus, so he continues to ask questions. Jesus shows the need for the sacrament of baptism through their discussion. After their discussion, the Gospel writer further explains Jesus' point. Jesus came not to condemn the world, but to save it. Belief, or faith, is required to be saved. What we see working through this salvific event is the relationship of the Father and the Son. Though not mentioned in today's reading, the Holy Spirit—the love between the Father and Son—brings this salvation to fruition.

**Q FOCUS:** *The Trinity is a mystery, but we can still encounter God and experience God's love.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

The glorious Easter season has come to an end. The Church now begins Ordinary Time, but this Sunday and the next are solemnities focusing on core beliefs of the Church. Today is the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity and next Sunday is Corpus Christi. During this week, we remember St. Boniface (June 5), a bishop and martyr who was sent to bring the Gospel

to Germany. St. Norbert (June 6) was the founder of the Norbertines, an order that wanted to reform the clergy, reminding priests of the simplicity of their ministry as opposed to the trappings of the world.

### Church Teaching Connection

"What is this eternal life? It is the immeasurable and freely given love of the Father which Jesus gave on the Cross, offering his life for our salvation. And this love with the action of the Holy Spirit has shined a new light on the earth and into every human heart that welcomes him; a light that reveals the dark corners, the hardships that impede us from bearing the good fruits of charity and of mercy" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, June 11, 2017).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

John 3:16-18

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned,



because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

► **Who here is good at math? Solve this math problem  $1 + 1 + 1 = ?$**

The correct answer is 1! In most cases,  $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ , but not today in “religious math.” Today we are talking about the Trinity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: one God, three persons.

It is hard to define the Trinity exactly and fully understand God because it is a mystery of our faith. This doesn't mean that we can't say anything about it, rather, it is a mystery we can learn more about and break open through the help of great theologians and holy men and women. Ultimately though, we cannot know the fullness of God because we are not God.

While the Father, Son, and Spirit are three different persons, they all share the same essence or nature—God's nature. Because they share the one nature, they are one. It is such a mystery because as humans, we don't experience a union quite like that. God is so completely unique in this way. There is nothing else like God! But you are made in God's image, so consequently, there is nothing quite like you, either.

► **How do you learn about someone?**

We learn about who people are by spending time with them. We ask them questions. We listen. We share meals with them. We share joys and sorrows

with them. The more open we are with someone, the more we get to know them, and we even can learn more about ourselves that way too.

► **What do you know about the Trinity? What symbols have been used to communicate the idea of the Trinity?**

One thing that we know about the Trinity is that it is a relationship of love. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. The love that flows between them is the Holy Spirit. This love is so great, so infinite, so amazing that it cannot be contained in and of itself. It overflows outside of itself. We might even say that the overflow of love of the Trinity is expressed in creation and in you and me. We are products of the love of God.

That is why today's Gospel reading is incredibly beautiful. God loved the world so much that he sent his Son to save it. This is the nature of God; an abundance of love. God doesn't hate you. God could never hate you. God made you and loves you, no matter what. In you resides this love of the Trinity. The Father sent the Son on a mission to bring you home. The Holy Spirit guides us to our heavenly home. Of course this love of God is a mystery, because love is a mystery.

► **What are the ways you describe love?**

There aren't enough words in our language to fully describe love. We can understand the concept. We might use analogies. Artists use poems, music, and paint. All of these seek to describe this thing so beautiful as love.

God is love. There aren't enough words in our language to describe God either. We can try. We can seek to understand. We can use art, literature, music, and reason. Ultimately this is a mystery. But this mystery has a name and a mission. This mystery loves you. This mystery has come to unite you to itself. So even if we do not understand fully the Trinity, we are called to believe. Believe you are loved. Believe that God loves you. Believe that he will never abandon you. If you do that, you have eternal life.



## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 198.

**The Trinity is a central belief of Christians, yet it is a mystery.**

**Jesus reveals the love of the Father and the work of the Spirit. They are on a mission of love.**

**God loves you so much that he sent his Son to save you. You are precious in the eyes of God.**

## Act on the Word

### Symbols of the Trinity

For this activity, you will need paper and pens, or participants can use their phones if they have them, and access to different symbols of the Trinity.

If this activity is done in a church setting and you have access to the church, begin with a scavenger hunt for symbols of the Trinity in the Church. Give the participants paper and pens to write what they see, or if they have technology, they can take pictures with their phones and share them after the scavenger hunt.

Then share with the teens that the Church has many famous symbols of the Trinity. For many years the majority of the people were illiterate. They could not read. Instead, they would look to art and symbols to understand complex ideas. The Church has always used symbols to explain the mystery of the Trinity. The mystery of the Trinity is that God is

three persons, but one God. They all share the same essence or nature: God’s nature. So the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Spirit, but they all share the nature of God and are one God.

Next, have the teens think of the famous symbols of the Trinity. Share them with the large group. Break the group into small groups. In the small groups, you will come up with a modern symbol of the Trinity. Think of one thing that is three things, but still one thing. Give enough time for each group to come up with modern examples. Provide paper and pens so they can write out their ideas. Allow the groups to share their examples in the large group.

### Closing Prayer

*O Most Holy Trinity,*

*one God, yet Three Persons,*

*you are the mystery in which we live.*

*Teach us to be faithful witnesses to you,  
proclaiming Good News in many ways  
throughout our day.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus*

*Christ, your Son,*

*who lives and reigns with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,*

*God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.