

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

The Epistle reading today sums up well your ability to understand and grasp the Holy Trinity. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” What does this mean? You can’t understand God on your own. There’s a reason this is the case; he’s God and you’re not. Not only that but you are a sinner and God is holy. That’s who God is and yet, this is also the same God who says today, “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

And really that’s part of the mystery of God and the mystery that is the Gospel. It’s quite something to think about the Lord who is the Creator of all things and who is eternally one God in Three Persons and yet he is the very same God who came down from heaven, lived a perfect life, died on Good Friday, and rose on Easter Sunday. The incomprehensible God is the God who came to save his people by taking on their sin and dying for them. This, though, is how you know him. The unknowable God reveals himself to you through his word. You know God through the person of Christ and him crucified. The preaching of Jesus to Nicodemus in the Gospel reading is this image of Christ crucified the God who came to save his people and give them a new birth, a birth from above into his eternal Kingdom. This is where the Epistle reading is seen through the lens of the Gospel reading.

Nicodemus, in John 3, came to Jesus by night and wanted to talk. He didn’t want to talk about the latest gossip or who was marrying who in Galilee, it was something else. He had some questions about the things of God and wanted answers from this Teacher who was going around and causing quite the chatter. In this encounter Nicodemus does indeed get some answers but it’s not necessarily on the level he was thinking. The mind of God is unknowable and must be revealed to men.

Jesus tells Nicodemus the same thing when he said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

That gets to the point in a nutshell. The Holy Trinity is an article faith; we simply must confess it. Even at times when God tells reveal something about himself it doesn’t always mean we will fully understand it. That’s how it is with God. We have no knowledge of him on our own. The Bible does teach that all people have a general knowledge of God such as knowing there is a higher being and we are answerable to it. Only through the word of God, however, does the Lord reveal things to us about himself and how we know who the true God what he does. Apart from this word, we are left in the dark and left up to our own devices, we fashion false gods in our image and likenesses that can be made to fit our personal agendas. These gods go by many names or they may even try to have the name of the true God but have been changed and manipulated to the point that it is so far from the Scriptures that it is laughable. God is God and we are not. There’s nothing we can do about it. Salvation isn’t found in the general knowledge of God, the only way we have a saving knowledge and faith in the true God is through the Scriptures. This is the catholic faith and unless a man confesses it, by the Holy Spirit, he will perish eternally.

Festival of the Holy Trinity—May 31, 2026

The fact that God does reveal himself to us through his word is nothing short of gracious. He doesn't leave us to ourselves rather St. Peter tells us, "no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." God used his creatures, men, to write what was revealed to them in order that God's people would know him in a divine and saving way. God's people would know God personally through this inspired word; the Holy Scriptures.

God also came down from heaven, as he had revealed and promised, to save his people. An unknown and impersonal god doesn't do that. False gods require that man earn his redemption in some way, shape, or form. Not so with the Holy Trinity. Jesus is the Word made flesh. He is God revealed in the Person of the Son. When Nicodemus came to him, then, he wasn't just talking to some rabbi but was talking to God himself. The content of their discussion is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible.

Jesus takes their discussion and brings it into heaven. He reveals to Nicodemus and to us what it all of this means. He shows who we are and what must happen to us in order to inherit eternal life. Nicodemus didn't get it at first. He was still thinking about earthly things. Jesus said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

To inherit eternal life and to know God as he truly is means that man must have a birth that comes from above. He has to be killed and rise again to a new a life and into a new kingdom. He needs to be washed clean by the water and the Spirit. The only way this can happen is if God himself does it. Man can't bring about his new birth by his own decisions, knowledge, kindness, obedience, will, or desire. Only God can give us a new birth and how he does it is through his appointed means. Jesus says it's by water and the Spirit; our baptism. Does this make sense in our minds with our own understanding? No, which explains why so many people try to rationalize this away and turn it into something that we can grasp or have a say in. It's more logical for us to think we are Christians because we make a decision for God as opposed to the Lord working through water and the word. But at the end of the day that thinking of men only produces doubt, confusion, and no real comfort that God gives when he places it all in his hands.

The wonderful thing about all of this is that the unsearchable, incomprehensible mind of God is revealed to you in Christ and what you know about God is proclaimed. "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

The incomprehensible and unknowable is comprehended and known in Jesus. This is who the true God is and he is your God. In what is foolishness to the world God has accomplished your salvation. The manner by which you are redeemed and have eternal life is by the Son of God dying for you and in your place. You in your sin can't comprehend that nor does it deserve it. It's all because of God's grace which is profoundly divine. The Holy Trinity's will and purpose is to save you and he has done it. In faith, which is also a gift of God's grace, you have all that your God has done.

The antiphon in the Introit says it beautifully today, "Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity. Let us give glory to him because he has shown his mercy to us." How wonderful it is to have this mercy shown in Christ. With the prophet Isaiah we cry out, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Yet God's response is not to strike us down but instead to say with the angel, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." He does this as we are baptized, hear his word, and feast at his Supper.

Who has known the mind of God? No one has but God has revealed it. The Lord has done wondrous things. As his people we confess this here and in every place. The Christian mind then, talks about the things of God and these are far

Festival of the Holy Trinity—May 31, 2026

greater than any idea of men. These things of God are eternal even as God's word endures forever. Thanks be to God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all things. He alone is "holy, holy, holy." He is our God and we are his people. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

On this day you see who your God is and rejoice in the great mercy he has toward you. God is your Father. The Son has saved you. The Holy Spirit is preaching to you and working through his word and sacraments this very day. The Triune God, the Holy Trinity is your God, he is your Lord. And it's your God who has given you a birth from above into his kingdom. He has worked this as you have been baptized. The Holy Trinity's divine name has been placed upon you, and you have eternal life. This is truly a miracle worked by God that you, a sinner, would be given a new birth into God's eternal kingdom. That's reason to rejoice in the mystery of the Gospel. It boggles the mind that God would do this, but such is his grace and mercy toward you in Christ.

"No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Descending from on high God in the flesh has redeemed you. He has called you his own and gives you eternal life.

As high as God's ways may be and in this life you will never fully understand the Trinity you still have all that he is and has done. It's yours in your God given faith. Hear this word of God and confess it faithfully in all that you say and do. Join together with the saints gathered in this place today, those with this same word and confession around the world and who have gone before you in the faith. Hear your Lord speak to you. Confess your sin, repent, and have the forgiveness of Christ. Join together with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven in the song that Isaiah the prophet heard, and you sing this day. Enter into the holy, holy, holy presence of God as you hear his word and kneel at this altar to receive the true Body and Blood of Christ given and shed for you. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is here and his name is upon you for your eternal life now and forever.

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