

31st May 2026 – Trinity Sunday – Sarah Fagg

It is Trinity Sunday; the day preachers are filled with dread that they might accidentally slip into a heresy. Behind the jokes about heresy lies a real truth; Christians have wrestled for centuries with how to speak about the God who meets us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Ever since the early church, theologians have tried to understand and debate what the Trinity means. The Doctrine of the Trinity was debated at the Council of Nicaea in 325, where it was decided that the Son was of one substance with the Father. Then in 381 the first Council of Constantinople the Trinity was declared and that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit shared equality.

People have continued to grapple with the Doctrine of the Trinity by asking questions like: how can one God be three persons? How can all three persons be completely equal? What happens when we differentiate in our worship to one person of the Trinity? What does the Trinity have to teach us about God?

However confusing it may be, all persons of the Trinity are equal and all work together. A reason this is difficult to fully comprehend is because the human relationships we encounter are rarely equal, we see power imbalances and different strengths and weaknesses. But as God doesn't have any weaknesses this means that there is never a power struggle dynamic. But the doctrine of the Trinity is not only a mystery to ponder — it is a gift that shapes how we live as Christians

But how does the Trinity enhance our Christian life? This is crucial to consider because it is the Trinity that makes Christianity unique and it can lead to interesting inter-faith dialogues; people may want to know how we can worship a trinitarian God.

In our Gospel passage we see the disciples are sent out to all nations to baptise in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, this formula has been used now for centuries at baptism. It is really exciting to reflect on how ancient this is and that at baptism we are invited into communion with the Trinity.

Baptism can also be used as a tool to try and understand the Trinity so today we are going to reflect on some of the gifts the Trinity pours out into baptism. I suggest that we are provided with three gifts through baptism:

- Regeneration – leading us to think of the Father all the way back to the time of creation.
- Release from sins – leading us to reflect on Jesus on the Cross dying for our sins. And
- Relationship – leading us to think about how the Spirit guides us in all our relationships.

These are three gifts which we receive from God through our baptism and although all persons of the Trinity are present through each moment, we can reflect on this in more detail to grow in closeness to the Trinity.

The early church fathers like Gregory of Nyssa, Irenaeus and Augustine spoke of the concept of regeneration through baptism. Regeneration is the transmutation of life where a person is newly created in baptism through water and Spirit.

It explains the process of how a Christian becomes a new person through baptism. When thinking about regeneration through baptism it might lead us to think of creation which begins in Genesis, showing God as creator, which is significant in baptism where a person is being remade in a relationship with the Trinitarian God.

God as Creator regenerates a person at baptism which shows the Father's power and presence. This does not mean the Son and Spirit are absent from creation — as Genesis 1 shows, all

three present — but the idea of regeneration naturally draws our attention to the Creator.

Release from sin is another feature of baptism. At the font we are washed with water and the stain of original sin is removed. This is a moment to reflect on the love of God — that the Father sent the Son to die for us, so that we might be reconciled and drawn back into relationship with the divine.

Tradition helps us here. Augustine wrestled constantly with sin and temptation, and Paul speaks of doing the very things he does not want to do. Their honesty reassures the newly baptised that the struggle with sin is not a sign of failure but part of the Christian life. Through forgiveness the circulation of love begins again.

It would be easy to focus only on Jesus in this moment of forgiveness, but the whole Trinity is at work. The Son's death opens the way back to the Father, and the Spirit strengthens us when we fall. So even in this part of baptism — release from sin — the newly baptised person is learning how Father, Son and Spirit work together to restore and sustain them.

Relationship is also an integral part of baptism. A newly baptised person is not only drawn into relationship with God but welcomed into a new community. Once someone has been regenerated and released from sin, they are invited into the life of the Church — a community shaped by the Spirit and sustained by the faith of those who have gone before us. In Acts we see these communities forming: people devoted to the apostles' teaching, sharing life together, and being transformed by the Spirit's presence.

Rowan Williams reminds us that baptism is the moment a person is fully received into this community. It is usually a public act, allowing both the congregation and the candidate to declare their commitment. But baptism is not only about belonging — it is also about being sent. The newly baptised

receive a candle, a sign of Christ's light in them, and are called to carry that light into the world. This new community does not ignore the world's neediness, but lives in hope, seeking to rebuild and renew through the shared identity of being in Christ.

This new relationship teaches us something of the Trinity. The Father, Son and Spirit live in perfect communion, each pouring life and love into the other. Their unity becomes a pattern for our own relationships — in the Church, in our communities, and in the world. The Trinity is at work in every moment of baptism, drawing us into God's life and showing us how to live in relationship with one another.

So as we go out from this place and perhaps reflect back to our own baptisms we can be reminded that the Trinity is within us and this is expressed in our gospel today “And remember I am with you always to the end of the age” and we can trust that the Father has regenerated us through baptism, the Son has released us from sin through the Cross and the Holy Spirit leads us to build good relationships with those we meet.

And so, having reflected on the gifts of regeneration, release, and relationship, we turn now to the words of Saint Paul in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians — a blessing that gathers us again into the life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So let us join together in praying the Grace, trusting that the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit goes with us:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen