

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year A

Fr. Samuel Springuel

31 May, 2026

1st Reading Exodus 34:4b-6,8-9

Responsorial Psalm Daniel 3:52,53,54,55,56

2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 13:11-13

Gospel John 3:16-18

If you were present for the Easter Day Mass, you might recall my dissection of the Easter sequence. I thought I might do something similar for today, the Feast of the Holy Trinity. I expected to find that the sequence is optional, but to my surprise I found that there was no sequence assigned for the day at all. In the current Roman Rite there are, in fact, just 4 assigned sequences: 2 required, Easter and Pentecost, and 2 optional, Corpus Christi and Our Lady of Sorrows. Indeed, based on my research, Trinity Sunday didn't have an assigned sequence even before the liturgical reforms after Vatican II. That's not to say that no sequences for Holy Trinity have ever been written. Several were written during the Middle Ages, but to quote Abbot Gueranger, "They are much overladen with metaphysical terms, and, for the most part, have but little melody or poetry in them. They give us the language of the Schools, with so much roughness, that they would scarcely find any readers now-a-days to relish them." Harsh words from the founder of the Solemes congregation and who was otherwise noted for promoting traditional chants in the liturgy.

All is not lost, however, as Abbot Gueranger goes on to say, "There is one, however, the one composed by Adam of Saint Victor [...], that maintains, even in its scholastic phraseology, all the majesty and melody which characterize the compositions of that great Poet." So I propose to look at that sequence today, though perhaps in less detail than I did the Easter one. I'll quote the sequence's original Latin so that you can hear the "majesty and melody" that Abbot Gueranger referred to. But I will translate it too, so that we can reflect on its meaning together.

*Profitentes unitatem veneremur Trinitatem pari reverentia,
Tres personas asserentes, personali differentes a se differentia.*

With one worship, we venerate the Trinity. Three persons we see, distinguished by their personal differences.

*Hæc dicuntur relative, cum sint unum substantive, non tria principia;
Sive dicas tres vel tria, simplex tamen est usia, non triplex essentia.*

Not three principles, but one substantial unity, differing only in relations. We speak of them as three, but they are simply one, not three, in being.

Simplex esse, simplex posse, simplex velle, simplex nosse, cuncta sunt simplicia;

Non unius quam duarum sive trium personarum minor effiçacia.

Simple being, simple power, simple will, simple knowledge, simply one. No less effective than two or three in power for being one.

These first three stanzas really highlight the Scholastic language about how God is both three and one. We hear about essence and simplicity, distinctions and relations.

Pater, Proles, sacrum Flamen, Deus unus: sed hi tamen habent quædam propria;

Una virtus, unum numen, unus splendor, unum lumen, hoc una quod alia.

Father, Offspring, and Sacred Flame: one God but each having that which is proper to them. One excellence, one divine will, one splendor, one light, what one has the others do too.

Patri Proles est æqualis, nec hoc tollit personalis amborum distinctio;

Patri compar Filioque spiritalis ab utroque procedit Connexio.

The Father and the Offspring are equal; an equality not destroyed by distinction. Equal too is the Spirit, the Bond which proceeds from the Father and the Offspring.

The choice of names here for the Son and the Holy Spirit are unusual, probably driven by primarily by poetic concerns as “Filius” and “Spiritus Sanctus” have considerably more syllables. Still, “sacrum Flamen,” sacred flame, recalls us to Pentecost, which we celebrated last week, and the way the Holy Spirit descended as tongues of fire.

Non humana ratione capi possunt hæ personæ nec harum discretio;

Non hic ordo temporalis, non hic situs aut localis rerum circumscriptio.

Human reason cannot encompass these persons nor their distinctions. There is no temporal order, no place, no boundary around them.

Nil in Deo præter Deum, nulla causa præter eum qui creat causalia;

Effectiva vel formalis causa Deus et finalis, sed nunquam materia.

Nothing in God besides God, no cause besides the one who creates causes. God is effective cause, formal cause, and final cause, but never material cause.

Ooff. The language of causes is some heavy Scholastic terminology. To approximate this simply, God is creator and destiny of creation, but creation is not divine.

Digne loqui de personis vim transcendit rationis, excedit ingenia;

Quid sit gigni, quid processus me nescire sum professus, sed fide non dubia.

To worthily speak of the persons transcends reason, exceeds genius. I believe without doubt in Generation and Procession, though I know not what they are.

Qui sic credit non festinet, et a via non declinet insolenter regia;

Servet fidem, formet mores nec attendat ad errores quos damnat Ecclesia.

He who believes these things should not hurry, and should not stray from the royal road. Keep the faith, learn good habits, and never attend to the errors condemned by the Church.

Good advice in these two verses. Don’t get swallowed up in the Scholastic definitions related to this Feast. God will always exceed our understanding.

Nos in fide gloriemur, nos in una modulemur fidei constantia;

Trine sit laus unitati, sit et simplæ Trinitati coæterna gloria. Amen.

We glory in our faith, we keep time in faith constantly. Sing praise to the Triune Unity, glory to the co-eternal simple Trinity. Amen.