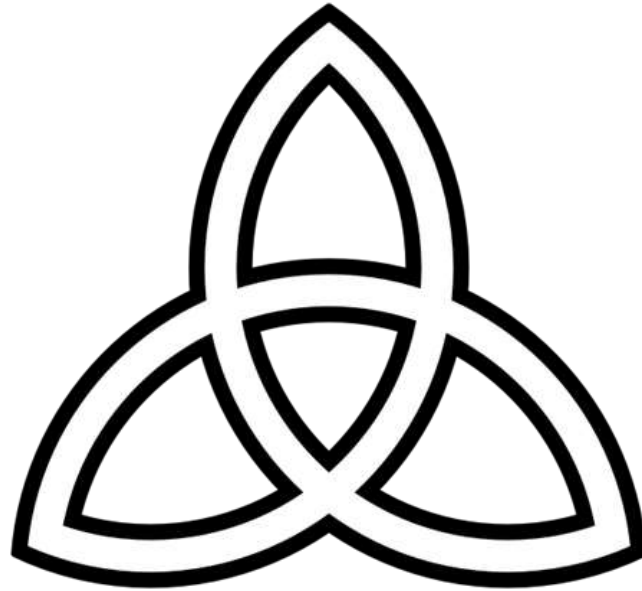


**New Life Episcopal Church
Uniontown, Ohio**



**A Sermon for Trinity Sunday
May 31, 2026**

Preacher – Pete Iole

Trinity & Faith

Come Holy Spirit come, come as the wind that blows and the fire that burns, come to guide the meditations of my mind, the feelings of my heart and the words from my lips as I attempt to understand God's holy word and deliver that message for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is commonly referred to as Trinity Sunday. But who, or what, is the Trinity? Looking in the Concordance is no help because that word isn't found anywhere in the bible. So how do we define and explain this central construct of our belief: in a unified God, represented in three parts, or Trinity? In his book The Worship of the Church Massey H Shephard tells us this label, for the Sunday after Pentecost, was first applied in the tenth century to honor the Blessed Trinity. It also serves to divide the year into halves, from Advent thru Pentecost and then the Trinity season (sometimes called Ordinary Time). Notice our first reading today is from the very beginning of the Bible. In the first half we concentrate on Christ's life and in the second half his teachings. Our second reading sums this up rather quickly asking us to live in peace. The Creed of Saint Athanasius, not frequently used but found on page 864 in the Book of Common Prayer, is somewhat helpful in understanding the concept of Trinity. Athanasius was a 4th Century theological scholar, advisor to the Bishop of Alexandria and ultimately ascended to that position. He was part of the Council of Nicaea, where we got the Nicene Creed. The Creed of St. Athanasius goes a bit deeper in defining the Trinity. I paraphrase the opening here: 'Whoever will be saved must keep the faith; and the faith is that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the Persons or subdividing the substance'.

Packed into this first part of the creed is the word "persons". For some people this is a source of confusion. In hope of clarifying, Athanasius continues "One person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit: all is one, equal, uncreated and co-eternal". Oops, now we've identified who the three persons are but how can it be that all are one, and not three? You must make a distinction here from the phrase Alexandre

Dumas' used in his novel "Three Musketeers" where it was "All for one" not all are one. To explain the Trinity concept Athanasius pulls out some pretty fancy rhetorical language that finds its format roots in the Gospel writings of John. The general idea is that something can be something else, while being both unique and yet undistinguishable from the joint. Consider phrases such as "I am in the Father, and He is in me" or "Whoever knows the Father knows me", and "He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine". (A logic diagram here would indicate that if Christ has everything from the God, and the Spirit has everything from Christ, then the Spirit has everything from God, however we also contrast that with the idea that the Spirit proceeds from God). OK, now we're getting a bit deep into the theological rabbit hole.

Let's step back a moment and consider, instead of "persons", we view the concept of un-severable identity. I am only one person, but I have multiple identities. I am a father to my children. I am a husband to my wife and a son to my mother. Each of these identities is manifested in a different form of love and respect. The identities are real, unique and have special responsibilities based on the type of love involved. These loves can be seen by, but not truly experienced across, reciprocal parties. I alone understand how these roles combine to form my own concept of self, which is a whole person, not sub-dividable into parts. From our human experience, we tend to easily grasp the Father-Son relationship but often struggle with adding the Holy Spirit. Another construct that might be helpful is to consider the legal relationship of a Power of Attorney. A person with unrestricted Power of Attorney has full authorization to enter or break contracts, make financial decisions, purchase property, act as your agent and even appear in court on your behalf. The only expectation is that the person holding your POA must act in your best interest otherwise, in a legal sense, they are you.

The Holy Spirit functions as an agent, putting things into motion and manifesting the will of God. The Holy Spirit also guides and protects, acting in our best interest. In the Gospel of John, between chapters 14 and 16, he includes the title of "Helper". Christ calls upon the

Holy Spirit to guide and protect the Apostles, thereby through extension all believers in Christ. The Holy Spirit facilitates the spread of the Word, beyond borders and cultures and races and religions. For me, this confirms divine intervention. Athanasius reminds us that the Holy Spirit is neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. I personally consider the Holy Spirit to represent a vector. The scientific definition of a vector is “a quantity that has magnitude and direction”. To think of this as a physical force, imagine the wind. You may notice that I begin my sermon with an appeal to the Holy Spirit: “Come as the wind that blows, come as the fire that burns”. I do this in recognition that I am only attempting to relate God’s word and depend on the Holy Spirit to provide direction. A sub-definition of vector from medical science includes “an agent that contains or carries modified genetic material and can be used to introduce exogenous genes into the genome of an organism”. What this is saying in simple terms is that something that we can’t identify (and therefore shouldn’t exist) somehow caused a physical change that we did not anticipate and cannot explain. Applied theology would suggest that the Holy Spirit is the vector, carrying God’s truth, intending to introduce that truth to mankind. It is the Holy Spirit that is credited with inspiring the prophecies that proceeded Christ and the theological writings that succeeded Christ. So, if the Holy Spirit proceeds from God, providing God’s truth, and Christ tells us that all that is God is also Christ, then the Spirit shares an un-severable identity with both God and Christ.

This concept is the cornerstone of what we can term as “Faith”. Our recent lessons have discussed and flirted with the concept of faith. The Old Testament has discussed the faith of generations and prophets. The faith to wander, to settle, to thrive. We’ve also heard the results of a wavering of faith and the benefit of faith returning. The Gospels give us stories where faith is the necessary ingredient for the manifestation of miracles. Looking at the various Letters and Acts we hear that faith in the power of the risen Christ provides a reward of joining him in heaven. There is a crucial difference between hope and faith. Hope acknowledges the possibility of not achieving a desired outcome. Faith recognizes the certainty of an outcome but acknowledges a lack of knowing when or how it will come to be.

Allow your hearts and minds to be open to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will guide and protect you. It will take and declare the truth in the message of God's love and Christ's sacrifice and help unite us in faith to spread the word that the community of Christians is open and welcoming to new members.

AMEN.