

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY
30 May 2026

Fr. Jim Fredericks

Part One: the readings for the day
Part Two: reflections on the readings
Part Three: guidelines for *lectio divina*

PART ONE: READINGS FOR THE DAY
Lectionary: 164

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

Early in the morning Moses went up Mount Sinai
as the LORD had commanded him,
taking along the two stone tablets.

Having come down in a cloud,
the LORD stood with Moses there
and proclaimed his name, "LORD."
Thus the LORD passed before him and cried out,
"The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God,
slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity."
Moses at once bowed down to the ground in worship.
Then he said, "If I find favor with you, O Lord,
do come along in our company.
This is indeed a stiff-necked people; yet pardon our
wickedness and sins,
and receive us as your own."

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

R. (52b) Glory and praise for ever!

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever;
And blessed is your holy and glorious name,
praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.

R. Glory and praise for ever!

Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory,
praiseworthy and glorious above all forever.

R. Glory and praise for ever!

Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

R. Glory and praise for ever!

Blessed are you who look into the depths
from your throne upon the cherubim,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

R. Glory and praise for ever!

Reading 2 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Brothers and sisters, rejoice.

Mend your ways, encourage one another,
agree with one another, live in peace,
and the God of love and peace will be with you.
Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the holy ones greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Alleluia Cf. Revelation 1:8

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
to God who is, who was, and who is to come.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel John 3:16-18

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.

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

Today, I think we need to do some theology.

I say this for two reasons. First, today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity. I think you will agree, the doctrine of the Trinity requires a little theological reflection. But in addition, this last week in Rome, Pope Leo promulgated his first encyclical, *Magnifica Huminitas*. This encyclical is about artificial intelligence. The Pope Leo has given us a profound theological reflection on the enormous power of this technology today. He wants us to reflect on how technology is changing how we see ourselves and how we act toward our fellow human beings.

How are these two issues, artificial intelligence and the Trinity, connected? They both raise important questions for us about what it means to be a "person." Concern for the dignity of the human person goes to the heart of the Pope's new encyclical. In fact, the subtitle of the encyclical is "on safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence."

In his encyclical, the Pope is careful to note that we should not look on artificial intelligence as something innately evil. My doctors at UCSF are already telling me stories about how AI is helping them in reading MRI images.

But neither is the Pope shy about addressing the dangers of a technology that is able to simulate human personhood. In this respect, artificial intelligence is unprecedented as a technology. The iron plough, the steam engine and the personal computer profoundly changed our world. These technologies also changed how we understand ourselves. But AI is a technology of a different order: AI, at least in some forms, is designed to interact with us as if it were a person.

Chatbots can be enchanting. But the simulation of human personhood by chatbots can be malignant as well. I fear for people, especially our young people, who prefer the company of their "AI companion" instead of the sometimes messy task of dealing with real human beings. In his encyclical, Pope Leo notes that engaging with other human beings is how we grow as spiritual beings. The philosopher

Albert Camus said that he learned right from wrong by playing soccer as a kid. Kids need other kids to learn how to be responsible, trustworthy, and morally principled. We become persons by interacting with persons.

I know people who are depressed and need to struggle with difficult things with a psychotherapist. But instead of getting the help they need, they are closeted with a chatbot that holds their attention by telling them what they want to hear. This is dangerous.

This needs to be said: only a person can serve as a psychotherapist.. An AI companion can't serve as a psychotherapist (or a priest or a friend) for the simple reason that a machine cannot care for a person in need. But machines are getting remarkably good at tricking us into thinking the care about us.

This leads me to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

We have been created in the image and likeness of God. And the God in whose image we have been created is mysterious indeed. You know the formula: three persons in one God. Christianity teaches that God is a community of persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

But the word "person" needs to be understood correctly.

A person is not an isolated individual. This is one of the great illusions of the modern world. A person can only be a person by being opened up into what lies beyond it: to other persons and, ultimately, to the Mystery of God.

There is an easier way to say this: a person can only be a person by being in love. Being in love means becoming a person by stepping out beyond ourselves and offering ourselves to another in an act of faith, hope and love.

We have been created in the image and likeness of a God who is a communion of persons. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity teaches us that we are persons, not lonely, isolated individuals. We are most radically ourselves only when we are in communion with one another and with God.

In his encyclical on artificial intelligence and its dangers, Pope Leo reminds us that we have a “pressing duty to remain profoundly human.” In fact, the task of being “profoundly human” is the Christian vocation itself. And to pursue this great vocation, Pope Leo is asking us to grapple with the depths of our personhood and the dignity of every human person.

PART THREE: INSTRUCTIONS FOR *LECTIO DIVINA*

I suggest that you use the readings and my reflections as an opportunity for practicing *lectio divina* (“divine reading”). This is an ancient spiritual practice that started with the great monks in the Syrian and Egyptian desert back in the early days of the Church. It is really quite simple.

Step one: calm your mind (my Buddhist friends describe the mind as “a mango-tree full of chattering monkeys”). I find that paying attention to your breath for a few minutes is a practical and effective way to do this.

Step two: read the readings slowly and attentively. Savor the words as if you were tasting a great Pinot Noir. Don’t rush. You are not looking for information or instructions. You are making friends with a sacred text which will bless you abundantly if you will only open your heart to it and let it speak to you. In *lectio divina*, we are not actually “reading” the Bible. Rather, we are “listening” to the Bible as the sacred words speak to us.

Step three: repeat step two.

Step four: read the homily on the readings.

Step five: Ask yourself a few questions:

- What particular words in the readings call out to me most forcefully?
- What is going on in my life such that these words call to me so forthrightly?
- How am I being asked to change, both interiorly and exteriorly?
- In light of this *lectio divina*, how am I being invited to be of service to the world today?

