

Trinity Sunday 2026

Genesis 1:1-2,4a
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

QUEER. The letter “Q” found in the unpronounceable LGBTQ+ and the various related initialisms associated with gender, sexuality, and identity diversity.

QUEER. A pejorative aimed at demeaning another person, clearly contrary to the baptismal promise to respect the dignity of every human being.

QUEER. A word that raises eyebrows and anxieties. A word seldom used in polite conversation, much less a sermon. But as I come to this eighth day in the Octave of Pentecost — called Trinity Sunday — I agree with Anglican Archdeacon Rachel Mann, a gifted priest, writer, and theologian who maintains “The Christian God is a queer God,” and like her, “I cannot begin to imagine anything queerer than the doctrine of the Trinity.”¹

In scholarly terms, *queer* is used primarily as a verb: it means “to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimize, ways of thinking and being that force human beings into neat categories and boxes. Queering theology challenges us to move away from our tendency always to make God over in our own likeness and image. If we’re to be bearers of the image of God, called into the likeness of Christ, animated in the freedom of the Spirit, we can expect to be challenged by the queerness of God. Especially the Trinitarian affirmation of a God who’s both essentially three and essentially one.” As Rachel Mann says, “I cannot begin to imagine anything stranger or queerer than that. It’s an outrage to simple,

¹ *The Christian Century*, October 2022, pp.38-39

populist thinking. The doctrine [of the Trinity] sits there in the architecture of Christian imaginations, and we barely begin to appreciate the ... queerness of it all.”

Our readings today say far less about the nature of God than they do about human nature, specifically our hunger for explanation.

Genesis 1 begins our tradition’s remix of tales told long before in many pictographs and tongues.

In the portion from Matthew’s gospel Jesus bids farewell to a band of disciples one short of the original dozen; a mixed crowd of the doting, the dedicated, and the dubious; instructs them to make disciples of all nations using an unexplained Trinitarian formula; and addressing readers and hearers at least 80-90 years after the Resurrection, assures them of his presence despite his obvious physical absence.

And the second letter to the Corinthians concludes with an appeal to put things in order, live in peace, and seal it with a kiss—instruction that shares a strong resonance with the admonition of my parents to the trinity of me and my two little brothers as we sat tousled and tattered in the tumult of our roughhousing in the bedroom we shared. And to judge from the state of current affairs throughout the world, about as effective.

Pages 864 and 865 in the *Book of Common Prayer* offer examples of the vain human endeavor to make sense of the mystery of God. Most notable is the Creed of St. Athanasius—a text commonly appointed for use today. (Read it and be grateful for the liturgical omission this morning). The main take-away from that creed is the word *incomprehensible*. It’s one of the earliest and best examples of an intentional queering of theology.

The first five to six centuries of the Christian church continued and amplified many of the contentions documented in biblical accounts, some escalating to bloodshed and warfare. The spirit of Christianity's first millennium was one of rigorous debate and disagreement over "right" belief. Hence the development and adoption of creeds, written statements of theological premises. Lives and fortunes rested upon the flimsy foundations of ideological certainty.

Any assertion that God can be understood — that one's conception of God is definitive — is the bedrock upon which heresy is built. To *comprehend* a thing is to mentally grasp, to fully understand its complete nature, meaning, or significance. To *comprehend* a thing is to harness a thing, to own it, to control it. Such comprehension is the taint and the taunt of the symbolic apple in Eden—the deepest hunger of the creature is to possess the fullness of the Creator who alone possesses the knowledge of good and of evil.

Every creed is a queer document — how can the ephemeral intimacy of relationship be codified? As Rachel Mann writes, "A queer lens—offering a skewed and disruptive attention to what is already there and what has been excluded—reappraises our traditions and invites us to locate our weirdness and particularity in a God who receives our actual bodies with joy. ... [A sanitized Jesus] does no honor to the biblical story of a God whose living body is pierced and penetrated and whose risen body bears the marks of trauma into heaven. Whether we identify as queer or not, a picture of God or humanity that edits out all that seems strange is not a vision of a life-giving world." But the Athanasian creed — a creed that acknowledges and espouses an incomprehensible God is surpassingly queer.

When I prepare a sermon I'm rarely certain of where I'll go, or with whom. In this foray into the doctrine of the Trinity, I began with Rachel Mann, an ordained trans-woman in

the Church of England, and found my way eventually to Barbara Brown Taylor, an Episcopal priest and writer, who identifies herself as “... a privileged American boomer, a neurotypical mainline Christian cisgender woman of Western European descent.[who finds herself] increasingly at home with people who do not share [her] demographic. In an essay² reflecting upon her own spiritual and vocational journey she touches upon the “death of God” controversy that was a prominent example of queering the religious assumptions of the mid-1960s. She observes that “at least one way of understanding God’s demise was the divine willingness to be poured entirely out—into the body of Christ who died and rose again or into the body of the world, full of human beings who would have to stop looking to heaven for their cure and start taking care of each other instead.”

My former ideas of church, priesthood, sacred language, and beloved community have all been poured into the body of the world. This has changed my mind about my primary belonging, which is to the human family first and then to the Christian family that teaches me how to be human. It has changed my mind about the divine mission, which is not growing religion but healing the planet with any partners willing to report to the ER. It has changed my mind about Christ’s gift to humankind, which is not about paying debt but about showing what divine life and death look like in the flesh.

And she found a stronger orientation to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit — a redirection from the symbolic cross to “The genderless, image-bending presence of the Holy Spirit, which so easily escapes human capture. ... God’s wild card, played over and over again when old forms fail and old wells run dry, making way for new and surprising births to take place.”

² *The Christian Century*, July 15, 2020.

Another thing to love [she says] is what bad taste the Spirit has, paying no attention to what I find attractive, qualified, dignified, or smart. The Spirit just keeps choosing the path of least resistance to more life, happy to run over me if I insist on standing in the way. ...

As Ally reminded us last week, every ending is a new beginning. Trinity Sunday ends the seasonal journey begun on the first Sunday of Advent. Now we begin another long season of living into all we've taken from this journey.

And I've queered the Trinity on this Trinity Sunday. So I offer this unusual commencement advice. Reflect upon the notion of the Trinity, but don't rely upon it. It is, after all, a product of human imagination. Like the golden calf and all the images of all the gods ever formed of our imaginations. Close the textbook on the certainty of religion and spend the days, weeks, and months ahead with the living God. Improvise, experiment, experience, and enjoy life and love, family—biological and chosen, and friends—both the old ones and the ones you've yet to meet.

May the love of God enfold you,
The light of Christ illumine your path,
And the Spirit guide you now and always into all Truth. AMEN.

Sam A. Portaro, Jr.
May 31, 2026 • St. Chrysostom, Chicago