

Deacon Chris Potter
Trinity Sunday – Sun., June 11, 2022

Good morning! My name is Chris Potter, and I am a deacon. I'm a vocational deacon, so I work fulltime in the secular world, which is a part of my ministry, working for an education non-profit. Taking the role of a servant while working outside the Church lets me witness the needs of the community and share those with you, then support us—the Church—in acting on those needs, so that we can create a community that's as close to the Kingdom of God as possible.

Today is Trinity Sunday, and since I'm a deacon and not a priest, I'm not going to get too theological on you—don't worry. While priests call us in to be shaped by Scripture and worship, deacons send us out to practice our faith in the world. So, I'm interested in how the Trinity transforms us. How does the trinitarian nature of God help us practice God's will in our own lives?

I'm going to share a prayer that I've found useful in my life that I hope will help us listen for God, to allow God to be our guide. Because, when God's our guide, we are so much happier and at the same time of such better use to our community. We just have to listen.

I was *not* listening, in the first part of my life. Imagine me in 2009, in college at UMass Amherst. I was raised by two professors of ethics, but I had just made my first strong group of friends and I was wasting a lot of time partying. When I saw dawn, it was usually because I was still awake from yesterday, not because I was up early. My life was fun, but not satisfying, and it did nothing to serve others.

In Spring 2009, my Music Appreciation class went to Grace Church in Amherst to hear an organ recital. I had never prayed in my life but while my classmates and I were sitting in the pews a feeling struck me to pray. The

answer was an idea not from my own mind, but that filled my mind clearly and completely: “pray more.” The message was so clear, I did continue to pray more in the following days, but I had no idea what doing God’s will actually looks like. Again, in prayer, the answer was overwhelmingly clear, filling my mind: “read the Gospels.” I didn’t change overnight and I still am by no means free from sinful behavior, but from that day forward God has turned my life closer to His will, and I am profoundly grateful for it.

Where’s the Trinity in this? If I don’t talk about the Trinity today, it probably won’t come up until next Trinity Sunday a year from now! What does the three-part nature of God have to do with transforming people like me and you? I’ll give you two reasons: the Trinity is a model, and the Trinity is a guide.

The Trinity is a model because God, Jesus (ascended into heaven), and the Holy Spirit are in constant communication and of one will. They are one being, indivisible. Now, we humans are estranged from God by our sin—our divergence from God’s will and failure to honor the sacredness of each other—but imagine our lives if we were like the Trinity, in constant communication with God and of one will, perpetually understanding and practicing God’s will. I want that, and that’s what God wants for us: to willingly adhere to God’s will.

So, the Trinity is a model for us, and it’s also a guide. From God the Creator we get the Ten Commandments and the Law, from Jesus we get the values of servanthood, reconciliation, and love, and the example of his ministry. And from the Holy Spirit, we get constant guidance. Each element of the Trinity guides us.

Go back to the Gospel: *“the Spirit will guide you into truth, ... for it will speak what it hears from me.”* All we need to do is listen!

So, it's been 13 years since that first encounter with the Holy Spirit at the organ recital. Slowly, I've learned to set aside time to listen to the Holy Spirit. We have all committed ourselves to God, now how do we understand God's will to conform ourselves to it?

Whether it's routine morning prayer, a time to make an important decision, or the moments before a difficult conversation, I find a quiet space where I won't be disturbed and pray,

Dear Lord God... I know that you have helped me in the past... I have faith in your guidance and wisdom... This is my problem... This is what is on my heart... Please, guide me to your will.

And I listen.

Sometimes, the right idea flashes into my mind immediately; I check it against the Gospel and I get up and do it. Other times bad ideas come to mind first, things that may be selfish or convenient. Such ideas, held in prayer, do not rest comfortably on the heart. Throw them out and keep listening. When an idea comes to me in prayer that does sit well with my heart in prayer and is consistent with Jesus' message, I say "Amen" and get to work. This prayer has moved me into action countless times: to turn away from sin, to make an apology, to get off my butt. Good things happen when we invite God in.

I will add: there are times when there's no response. Those are times, I think, when God, having directed us in the past, is asking us to stand on our own, without God's support. In those times, we rely on the Gospels and our Christian values. And, some people will listen to God in other ways, besides this quiet prayer. Many people receive God's guidance in the woods or in conversation. The important thing is that we make an intentional effort to discern God's will.

When we let ourselves be led by God, we quickly find ourselves less anxious, freed from guilt and shame, and simultaneously a blessing to others. What a gift!! We are more able to be charitable and loving in every interaction, more patient. Glorious is God who does this for us! *Hallelujah!*

In a moment, we will stand and pray the prayers of the people together. But first, consider an issue that is on your heart this morning, and I invite you to try this prayer practice. Maybe you can even use it regularly, after today.

About what do you need God's guidance?

Let us pray.

Dear God, thank you for your Holy Spirit, our Guide, and for guiding us in the past... I know that you have the power and desire to guide me, and I ask for your guidance now. Here is my situation... What would you have me do?

Amen