

What do you do when the emperor sends you into exile for the fifth time in three decades, and you’re seventy years old? A normal person might consider retirement. A normal person might say, “I’ve done my part.” But Athanasius was not a normal person. He was a Christian bishop who believed that knowing God the right way — the way God has revealed Himself — was worth every cost.

Earlier in his life, Athanasius had helped the Church articulate the truth we still confess in the Nicene Creed: that Jesus is not a created being, not a second-class citizen of heaven, but **true God of true God**, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father. Athanasius thought the matter was settled. But it wasn’t. The followers of Arius — who taught that Jesus was created — gained influence, whispered lies into the emperor’s ear, and Athanasius found himself exiled again and again.

Five times he was driven from his home. Five times he lost his position. Five times he was told to be quiet. And five times he refused. Why? Because for Athanasius, this wasn’t an academic debate. It was about **who God is**. It was about the identity of Jesus. It was about salvation itself. If Jesus is not fully God, then He cannot save. If He is not fully man, then He cannot stand in our place. Athanasius believed that the truth of the Gospel was worth exile, slander, and suffering.

And so today, on Holy Trinity Sunday, we remember him — not to admire his stubbornness, but to recognize the treasure he fought to preserve.

In Matthew 28, the risen Jesus says: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* Notice: **name**, not *names*. One name. One God. Yet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not a doctrine the Church invented. This is the way God has revealed Himself. The Father sends the Son. The Son redeems the world. The Spirit delivers that redemption to you. The Trinity is who God is and what He does, and so He is the author of the story of your salvation.

And this is why Athanasius fought so fiercely. If you lose the Trinity, you lose the Gospel. If Jesus is not God, then the cross is just a tragedy. If the Spirit is not God, then faith is just positive thinking. If the Father is not God, then creation itself is uncertain. Athanasius reminds us that where understanding struggles, faith accepts a God that is far above us. Faith rests in a God who defies understanding. We worship Him precisely because we cannot “figure Him out.” Faith receives God in the way He describes Himself.

In our worship today, we are confessing the Athanasian Creed — a long, careful, precise confession of who God is. Here’s part of it again:

*“It is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man... Perfect God and perfect man.”*

That's the truth Athanasius spent his life defending. And it matters because **your salvation depends on who Jesus is**. A Jesus who is only God cannot die for you. A Jesus who is only man cannot save you. But the Jesus of Scripture is both.

This is why doctrine matters. Not because we love arguments, but because we love the God who has revealed Himself to us. Christian Doctrine is simply knowing God the way He wants to be known.

However, Jesus doesn't only reveal God's name — He gives it.

When you were baptized, the pastor spoke the words Jesus commanded: *"I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* At that moment, God placed His name on you. You were claimed. Marked. Adopted. Joined to Christ's death and resurrection. The Trinity became the name you bear.

In a world obsessed with identity, baptism gives you one that cannot be taken away:

- **The Father** says, "You are my beloved child."
- **The Son** says, "You are forgiven; I have redeemed you."
- **The Spirit** says, "You are my temple; I dwell in you."

This is who you are. This is the name you carry. Athanasius stood firm because he knew the truth of God's name. But what about us? When speaking the truth might offend someone... When confessing Christ might cost us a friendship... When standing with Scripture might make us look foolish... What do we do?

If you're like me, you know the answer isn't flattering. There are times when we soften the truth, or stay silent, or massage our words to avoid conflict. For that, we must repent.

But here is the good news: The God whose truth we sometimes hesitate to speak is the God who has placed His name on us in baptism. The Father welcomes us. The Son forgives us. The Spirit strengthens us. And He makes us bold — not arrogant, not harsh, but loving and courageous. The world may say truth is relative. Some may say doctrine doesn't matter. But love and truth are not enemies. Love does not let a child play in traffic. Love does not let false ideas about God go unchallenged. Love speaks the truth — the truth of the Triune God who has acted in history to save us.

Athanasius spent his life confessing the name of God. You bear that name. You were baptized into it. You carry it now. You will die with it. And you will rise in it.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.