

Trinity (A)
(Exodus 34:4-5.7-9 / John 3:16-18)
31.05.2026
Conversation

In the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, there is a 15th century fresco of the Trinity: the Father is standing behind his Son on the Cross and between the Father and the Son there is the white dove of the Holy Spirit; the Virgin Mary and St John are on both sides of the Cross and below them are placed a man and a woman kneeling in prayer.

This fresco is what we call a *sacra conversazione*, a holy conversation. It was a popular type of Renaissance religious imagery that portrayed contemporary people in scenes with holy or sacred figures.

It seems to me that the artist Masaccio made a powerful theological statement in using the genre of the *holy conversation* for his fresco because it reminds us that the Trinity is dialogical, the place of a holy conversation between the 3 divine Persons.

The Father spoke his eternal Word in Jesus Christ, and the Spirit has the mission to remind us of all that Jesus said (cf. Jn 14:26). Pope Leo stated clearly that “the movement of the Incarnation is a dynamics of conversation” (*Hom.* 25.12.2025). So as the Father, the Son and the Spirit are engaged in a holy conversation, they invite us to be part of their conversation and they empower us to converse with one another. We must bear in mind that communication and communion, dialogue and unity are at the core of the identity of the Trinity; and because we have been made in the image and likeness of God, communication and communion, dialogue and unity are at the core of our own identity.

The conversation that takes place in the Trinity has nothing to do with trivial talks or superficial chatter, it has nothing to do with meaningless podcasts or aggressive debates. The art of conversation is driven by life, love and truth, it aims at creating bonds of communion and understanding. In a holy conversation, we use words in order to foster real relationships.

Despite the fact that we are bombarded by words all day long, and contrary to the common belief that this does not really matter, what the Trinity reminds us is that words matter, that to talk with somebody, to engage in a conversation with a stranger impacts on us. The psychologist Erich Fromm warns us: “There is no contact between human beings that does not affect both of them. No conversation between two people leaves either one of them unchanged.” (*The Art of Being*, p. 23)

For us to be careful about the way we speak, about the words we use and about whom we address is to choose what we want to become and what kind of impact we want to have on others and on the course of the world. Words matter, they shape our lives and our world.

It is important for us to remember Jesus’ words: “When the devil lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (Jn 8:44) Gossip and lies are from the evil one, according to Pope Leo, the devil “seeks to set humanity against God and people against one another.” (*Regina Caeli*, 10.05.2026)

The constant flow of lies and aggressive words thrown at us through all our electronic devices, the political leaders who speak non-stop and trivialise words, the religious leaders who are complacent or silent, and all of us who, on a daily basis, do not speak “the truth in love” (Eph 4:15), cultivate and participate in a culture of disconnection, distrust and violence, which sows seeds of division. Our responsibility is great. The feast of the Trinity is a good occasion for us to reflect seriously on all our conversations and check whether or not they reflect something of the love and unity that are at the heart of the Trinity.

It is clear that the point here is not to turn us into gloomy, sad and boring interlocutors or prophets of doom. As St John Henry Newman reminds us: “Gloom is no Christian temper.” (*Serm. 19, Present Blessings*, p. 1130) Our conversations can – and should be – seasoned with joy and seriousness. A good laugh is positive if it does not mean that we ridicule somebody else, words that perk us up are good if in the process we do not need to bring somebody down.

The sacred conversation which takes place at the heart of the Trinity is about communion and love. The love of Jesus and the Father in the Spirit reaches out to embrace us, to the point of lifting us up into the open circle of divine love. The Trinity challenges us when we err from this circle of divine love and use words as weapons to hurt others and when in our conversations, we denigrate or disparage our brothers and sisters in humanity.

Recently Pope Leo declared: “Courteous and clear dialogue, essential though it is, must be accompanied by a deeper conversion of heart: the willingness to set aside particular interests for the sake of the common good.” (*Address*, 21.05.2026)

As Christians, in a world which is marked by verbal violence and cheap words, we are called to allow God’s grace to convert our hearts so that our whole lives, like the life of the Trinity, may build up communion, strengthen peace and justice for the sake of the common good.