

THE TRINITY IN CHRISTIAN LIFE: Exploring the Interconnections of Contemplation, Community, and Compassion

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and three key aspects of Christian life: contemplation, community, and compassion. The Trinitarian doctrine, which describes the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one divine essence, forms the foundation for understanding a relational and transformative spiritual life. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the concept of the Trinity is applied in the everyday life of Christians, particularly in practices such as contemplation that draws one closer to God, building church communities that reflect unity and diversity, and engaging in bold acts of compassion toward others. The methodology involves a theological literature review with a focus on systematic theology and pastoral application, as well as practical analysis of how Trinitarian teachings are implemented within the church and broader society. The results show that contemplation, community, and compassion are not only theological concepts but are actively practiced in ways that connect Christians to the Trinitarian life. By living out the teachings of the Trinity, Christians are invited into relational support, reflecting God's love, and transforming the world through courageous and sacrificial acts of love. This study contributes by providing a theological framework that connects the doctrine of the Trinity with Christian practices of contemplation, community, and compassion, offering both spiritual insights and practical applications for living out Trinitarian love in everyday life.

Keywords: Trinity; contemplation; community; compassion; christian life

INTRODUCTION

Trinity Sunday is an important celebration in the Christian tradition that highlights the doctrine of the Trinity, which represents the relationship between God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Although this concept has been central to Christian teaching for centuries, there has been limited reflection on the practical meaning of the Trinity in daily life. Most discussions of the Trinity tend to be theoretical and dogmatic, leading many Christians to struggle in fully understanding how this doctrine can be applied in their spiritual and social contexts.¹ In this context, this article aims to explore the values of

¹ Adam L. Johnson, *Divine Love Theory: How the Trinity is the Source and Foundation of Morality*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2023), 45.

contemplation, community, and courageous compassion as essential components of applying the Trinity's teachings in the lives of Christians, particularly on Trinity Sunday.

Research on the Trinity has significantly advanced over recent decades. Most existing literature focuses on the theological and historical aspects of the Trinity. For example, Moltmann² explores the connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and the kingdom of God as an integral concept in Christian life. Another study by Bauckham³ emphasizes the role of the Trinity in shaping the narrative of salvation and human participation in God's life. While much research addresses the doctrinal and eschatological aspects of the Trinity, its application in practical life, particularly within church communities or interpersonal relationships, has been somewhat neglected.

Some previous studies have attempted to connect the concept of the Trinity to social life and community. For instance, Fiddes⁴ discusses how an understanding of the Trinitarian relationship can enrich the life of church communities, especially in terms of participation in God's life. However, while these studies note the importance of applying the Trinity in community life, they mainly focus on the church as a social institution rather than a space for learning and applying the values of contemplation and compassionate action in daily life. Additionally, Kilby⁵ examines the relationship between the Trinity and suffering, suggesting that the Trinity can offer profound insights into human experience, but her work remains disconnected from broader social practices.

Another relevant study by Tubagus and Saron⁶ argues that the doctrine of the Trinity can enhance the understanding of communal life in the church by emphasizing relational aspects of life within God and among humans. However, this research focuses more on theological aspects, whereas this study seeks to connect the practical and applicative aspects of the Trinity in social life. Contemplation as a means of deepening one's understanding of the Trinity, but again, his study falls short of addressing how these

² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2019), 33.

³ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and the Trinity: A Study in the Doctrine of the Triune God*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 22.

⁴ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*. (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 56.

⁵ Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2019), 88

⁶ Steven Tubagus & Timotius Bakti Saron. "Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan (Holy Spirit in the Trinity and Community of God's People)". *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 3, no. 1 (2021): 85-95. <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i1.30>.

concepts can be translated into building communities that are full of compassion and care for others.⁷

The thesis of this study is that, in order to truly understand and live out the Trinity, Christians must combine contemplation with the practice of community and courageous compassion. This study differentiates itself from previous research, which has primarily focused on doctrinal or theological analysis of the Trinity without addressing its practical implications for everyday Christian life. By adopting this approach, the article seeks to fill a gap in the literature by proposing that the Trinity is not only a doctrine to be believed but also a lifestyle to be lived out through concrete actions in community and service to others.

The primary objective of this study is to explore three key values—contemplation, community, and courageous compassion—as part of applying the teachings of the Trinity on Trinity Sunday. This article aims to show how these three values interact to form an authentic Christian life, both individually and collectively. By reviewing the existing literature and connecting it with practical Christian experience, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how the teachings of the Trinity can enrich daily life and become a source of strength in facing the challenges of the modern world.⁸

This study adopts a practical theological approach that focuses on the analysis of systematic theology and the pastoral application of the doctrine of the Trinity in three main dimensions of Christian life: contemplation, community, and compassion. In the initial stage, the research examines theological texts that discuss the doctrine of the Trinity and how this teaching is translated into practical life. In this regard, a systematic theological approach is used to explore how an understanding of the Trinity can shape Christian thought and practice in a holistic manner. For example, references to Fiddes⁹ who emphasizes the importance of participation in the life of God, and Moltmann's view of the relationship between the Trinity and the Kingdom of God, are employed to investigate the Trinitarian dimensions of both the contemplative and social life of

⁷ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*. (London: SPCK Publishing, 2016); Thomas B. Sarono & Tubagus Suhendra. "Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan." *Quaerens: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.33366/quaerens.v1i1.30>.

⁸ The challenges of faith in the modern world as written by Gianfranco Gionti. "God and the Big-Bang: Past and Modern Debates between Science and Theology." *arXiv*, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2310.19175>; David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021).

⁹ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*, 57.

Christians.¹⁰ This approach focuses on a theological understanding of the Trinity that illustrates the relationship between the individual and God in the contemplative dimension of spiritual life, as well as the relationship among fellow believers within the church community.

On the other hand, a pastoral theological approach is used to connect theological concepts with real-life practice in the church and society. Through this approach, the study explores how Trinitarian principles are applied in everyday pastoral activities such as worship, social ministry, and acts of compassion. The pastoral approach involves practical observation of how church congregations live out the doctrine of the Trinity, with concrete examples of courageous acts of love such as ministry to the poor, care for the sick, and advocacy for social justice. In addition, this article also employs a narrative analysis approach to examine how Christian communities understand and respond to the suffering of the world, as well as how they use the understanding of the Trinity to transform concrete actions in the real world.¹¹ Through this method, the article demonstrates how the doctrine of the Trinity can shape patterns of Christian living marked by love and service within the broader social context.

DISCUSSION

Contemplation: Dwelling in God's Presence

Contemplation in a spiritual context refers to the act of deeply reflecting on the presence of God, engaging in quiet, meditative prayer, and seeking a connection with the divine. It transcends intellectual thought and allows individuals to become more aware of God's presence within and around them. Contemplation involves cultivating a focused, silent awareness of God's work in the world, guiding individuals to align their hearts with God's will. Unlike other forms of prayer, which may involve speaking or requesting, contemplation centers on simply being in God's presence and allowing His silence to speak to the soul.¹² This deeper, more intimate engagement with God enables a reflective state that fosters spiritual growth and understanding.

¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 92.

¹¹ Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*, 101; Bonhoeffer, 1995, 81.

¹² Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*, 85; Ted Schroder. "A Meditation for Trinity Sunday – June 12, 2022." *TedSchroder.com*. 2022. <https://www.tedschroder.com/a-meditation-for-trinity-sunday-june-2022>.

Contemplation has been described in various ways by spiritual thinkers, each emphasizing its deep, transformative nature. Thomas Merton¹³ defines contemplation as "the highest form of prayer," which involves a complete surrender of the mind and the quieting of thoughts to simply rest in God's presence. Rohr¹⁴ states that this idea by describing contemplation as a practice of "looking with the eyes of the heart," where one moves beyond intellectual understanding and experiences God's presence beyond words or mental activity. Similarly, Ignatius of Loyola¹⁵ emphasizes the importance of contemplation in discerning God's will and cultivating love for God through prayerful reflection. Contemplation is a pure, loving gaze upon God that leads to a union with the divine beyond the mind and sensory distractions.

These definitions share the understanding that contemplation transcends ordinary thinking and prayer. It is not merely a cognitive activity but an experiential practice that leads to a deeper connection with God. While Merton, Rohr, and Ignatius highlight different aspects, they all agree that contemplation involves an intimate relationship with God that is nurtured through silence, stillness, and focused attention. Contemplation allows for a profound awareness of God's presence, which transforms the individual, deepening their understanding of divine love and truth. As Thomas Aquinas puts it, contemplation is a "silent and intimate union with God," providing a means for the soul to transcend mere intellectual understanding and to engage directly with the divine.¹⁶

In a world full of distractions, the importance of taking time for reflection in spiritual life cannot be overstated. Contemplation provides a sacred space where individuals can pause, slow down, and listen to the still small voice of God. This act of reflection fosters inner peace by helping individuals step outside the noise of daily life and engage with God in solitude.¹⁷ Regular practice of contemplation helps recalibrate the inner state, allowing the mind and heart to become attuned to God's purposes rather than the world's demands. As Moltmann¹⁸ notes, the practice of contemplation helps the believer's soul find peace and serenity by turning away from external chaos to focus on God's presence.

¹³ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, (New York, NY: New Directions, 2007), 122.

¹⁴ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*.

¹⁵ Peter Mark Tyler. "Raising the Soul in Love: St Ignatius of Loyola and the Tradition of Mystical Theology". *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022): 1015. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13111015>.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), II-II, q.180.

¹⁷ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*; Timotius Bakti Saroni & Tubagus Suhendra. "Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan": 1-15.

¹⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 112.

Contemplation, therefore, becomes a means of spiritual surrender. Through the quiet act of waiting in God's presence, individuals relinquish their anxieties, fears, and worries, replacing them with trust in God's sovereignty. Contemplation is an invitation to "let go of our control," allowing individuals to rest in the sufficiency of God's presence, which leads to a peace that surpasses understanding. This inner peace not only brings comfort but also provides the strength needed to face life's challenges with a steady heart, grounded in God's love and presence.¹⁹

In addition to fostering peace, contemplation deepens one's understanding of God—not through knowledge or intellectual study, but through direct, intimate experience. In the quiet space of contemplation, individuals encounter God's love and presence in a way that words or thoughts often fail to capture.²⁰ This experiential connection helps individuals understand the fullness of God's divine nature and draws them closer to the mystery of the Trinitarian relationship. Through contemplation, one becomes more attuned to God's grace, which transcends human understanding but can be personally experienced.

As contemplation deepens an individual's understanding of God, it simultaneously strengthens their relationship with themselves. Seeking and resting in God's presence allows individuals to confront their inner struggles, fears, and uncertainties that often hinder spiritual growth. Kilby²¹ notes that contemplative practices provide a way for individuals to confront these inner barriers, leading to spiritual healing and transformation. Through this process, individuals become more in tune with their true identity as children of God, experiencing both personal growth and a deeper connection to the divine.

In a world that is filled with distractions and noise, contemplation offers a pathway to deeper spiritual maturity. By regularly practicing the art of dwelling in God's presence, Christians cultivate a rich inner life grounded in divine peace and wisdom. This act not only enhances one's relationship with God but also transforms the understanding of oneself and one's place in God's creation. As Moltmann²² suggests, contemplation is a vital

¹⁹ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*.

²⁰ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*, 37; Michael Cunningham, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding the Love that Unites*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

²¹ Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*, 92.

²² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 115; William Lane Craig, "What's the Difference Between Classical and Social, Relational Trinitarianism?" *Reasonable Faith*.

tool for spiritual growth, providing Christians with the means to deepen their faith and cultivate a lasting connection with God.

Community: Strength in Unity

In Christian theology, the concept of community is deeply rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity. Just as God exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect relational unity, the Church is called to embody this same relational love and harmony among its members.²³ Christian community is not merely social interaction; it is a spiritual communion where believers live out their faith together, supporting, correcting, and loving one another as members of one body.²⁴ As Merton²⁵ states, “the Church is a mystery of communion that reflects the interior life of God”, making community not just a practical arrangement, but a theological imperative.

The New Testament emphasizes this reality repeatedly. In Acts 2:42–47, the early Church is depicted as a vibrant and sacrificial community where “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship... they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.” This depiction reveals how the early Christian community mirrored the generosity and mutual indwelling of the Trinity.²⁶ Similarly, Paul’s metaphor of the Church as a body in 1 Corinthians 12 shows that diversity of gifts and unity of purpose are not contradictory, but complementary.²⁷ The many members are one body, just as the persons of the Trinity are distinct yet united.²⁸

Community is also essential for spiritual formation. It is within the Christian community that believers learn to grow, to confess, to forgive, and to persevere. According

2014. <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/whats-the-difference-between-classical-and-social-relational-trinitarianism..>

²³ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*, 56.

²⁴ Alemitu Bezabih, Shadi Nourriz, Anne-Marie Snider, Rosalie Rauenzahn, George Handzo, & C. Estelle Smith. “Meeting Patients Where They’re At: Toward the Expansion of Chaplaincy Care into Online Spiritual Care Communities.” *arXiv*, (2025): a11366. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2506.11366>; Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*, 92.

²⁵ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 131.

²⁶ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*. (London: T&T Clark, 2019); Michael Vial, *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).

²⁷ Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2021), 85.

²⁸ Torrance, 2014, p. 110; see more Stephen R. Holmes, Paul D. Molnar, Thomas H. McCall, & Paul Fiddes. *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014).

to Bonhoeffer,²⁹ “a Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him”. Without community, spiritual growth often becomes stagnant, as it is through others that we are refined and challenged. Johnson³⁰ emphasizes that Trinitarian ethics demand a communal response: love is not just inward and vertical, but outward and horizontal.

Moreover, community is a site for healing and transformation. When Christians suffer, it is often the presence of a caring, praying community that becomes an instrument of God's grace.³¹ This solidarity in suffering echoes Christ's presence in human pain and reflects the Spirit's comfort and empowerment. The communal sharing of burdens and joys reflects the perichoretic relationship of the Trinity—each person indwelling and interpenetrating the others without loss of distinction.³²

In mission, the Christian community acts as a unified witness to the world. As Moltmann³³ argues, “the church exists for the sake of the world and not for itself”. Community gives strength for collective action, enabling the Church to feed the hungry, advocate for justice, and proclaim hope in a fragmented world.³⁴ Shared prayer, mutual support, and communal discernment form the foundation of mission. This kind of mission is not competitive or institutional but incarnational and relational, reflecting the sending nature of the Trinity.³⁵

Contemporary spiritual writers affirm the ongoing relevance of community. Richard Rohr³⁶ warns that without communal structures, contemplation can become self-indulgent and disconnected from social transformation. Similarly, Tubagus and Sarono³⁷ notes that “Christian identity is inherently communal; the isolated believer is a

²⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1954), 23.

³⁰ Adam L. Johnson, *Divine Love Theory: How the Trinity is the Source and Foundation of Morality*, 117; see also Michael Cunningham, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding the Love that Unites*.

³¹ Paul McIssac, “Seeing with the Heart: A Contemplative Form of Compassion.” *Catholic Research Journal* 11 (2020): 129.

³² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 23.

³³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 144.

³⁴ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*; Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society: A Theological Vision for Contemporary Challenges*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), 94.

³⁵ Bosch, 2011, p. 399; see also Daley, Brian E. “The Divinization of the Theotokos: Fifth-Century Christological Controversy and the Figure of Mary.” In *Patristic Spirituality: Classical Perspectives on Ascent in the Journey to God*, edited by K. M. Clarke and D. W. Springer (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 309–339.

³⁶ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*; Thomas B. Sarono & Tubagus Suhendra. “Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan”: 1–15.

³⁷ Steven Tubagus & Timotius Bakti Sarono. “Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan (Holy Spirit in the Trinity and Community of God's People)”: 85–95.

contradiction". Aquinas³⁸ echoes this by emphasizing the natural sociability of humans and the ecclesial nature of salvation. Community, in this sense, is not an optional element of Christian life—it is the form in which faith matures.

The Christian community is a prophetic sign to the world. When people of different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences live in harmony, practicing forgiveness and radical love, they embody the life of the Triune God on earth.³⁹ This is not utopia, but grace. Community is not perfect, but it is sacramental—a visible sign of an invisible reality.⁴⁰ As such, the Church becomes both a refuge and a witness, a sanctuary for healing and a staging ground for mission.

Courageous Compassion: Bold Acts of Love

Courageous compassion is a profound and daring form of love that requires not only emotional empathy but also a willingness to take bold actions in the face of injustice, suffering, or adversity. It is the type of compassion that challenges the status quo and calls believers to go beyond passive sympathy and engage actively with the pain of the world. Courageous compassion is rooted in the example of Christ, who showed bold love through His self-sacrifice and radical inclusivity, reaching out to the marginalized, oppressed, and broken-hearted.⁴¹ This type of love is not passive or complacent, but instead demands active engagement, even when it is uncomfortable or costly. As Moltmann⁴² states, "Compassion is not an emotion but a decision to stand in solidarity with those who suffer".

At its core, courageous compassion is about taking risks for the sake of others, often at the expense of one's comfort or security. In the Gospels, Jesus demonstrates this by associating with sinners, healing the sick, and standing up against oppressive systems of power. His compassion led Him to embrace the outcasts, including lepers, tax collectors, and the poor, demonstrating that love transcends societal boundaries.⁴³ Jesus' example calls Christians to act with boldness, to stand up for justice, and to extend grace and mercy

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), II-II, q. 180.

³⁹ Robert W. Jensen, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1: The Triune God*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 77.

⁴⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*.

⁴¹ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*, 85

⁴² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 118.

⁴³ Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and the Gospel*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2020); Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*, 123.

to those who need it the most, even when it means facing opposition or ridicule. As Vial⁴⁴ puts it, "Compassion without risk is an incomplete love, for love must engage the structures that perpetuate suffering". This call to action is not just about feeling empathy but involves risking personal comfort for the well-being of others.⁴⁵

Courageous compassion is also an expression of Christian maturity, as it requires an understanding of the deeper realities of suffering and the willingness to confront them head-on. It goes beyond a surface-level desire to alleviate pain, recognizing the systemic and personal forces that perpetuate suffering. This kind of compassion is transformative because it challenges the root causes of suffering rather than merely addressing its symptoms. As Rohr⁴⁶ notes, "True compassion requires us to face the reality of pain without turning away, and to act in ways that bring about real change". Courageous compassion, therefore, is not just about feeling sorry for others but about taking meaningful steps toward healing and justice.

The concept of courageous compassion is closely tied to the idea of solidarity, which is the commitment to stand alongside others in their pain and struggle. It requires empathy, yes, but it also demands action and a willingness to be present in the lives of others, particularly those who are suffering. As Bonhoeffer⁴⁷ writes, "The Church must not be the center of the world's suffering, but its presence and its mission are to serve as an answer to it". In a world where many are marginalized, Christian compassion is called to be bold, going beyond surface-level gestures and engaging in tangible ways that lift up those in need. This deep solidarity is the foundation of effective and transformative compassion.⁴⁸

One of the ways courageous compassion manifests itself is through advocacy and standing up against injustice. It is not enough for Christians to simply provide charity; they are called to confront the structures of sin and oppression that cause suffering. This requires courage, as standing up against societal norms and systemic injustice can often be met with resistance or even persecution. As Vial⁴⁹ argues, "Compassion that is not backed by action and resistance is an incomplete love, as it fails to confront the structures

⁴⁴ Michael Vial, *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*.

⁴⁵ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society: A Theological Vision for Contemporary Challenges*, 102.

⁴⁶ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*; Thomas B. Sarono & Tubagus Suhendra. "Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan": 1–15.

⁴⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 81.

⁴⁸ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and the Trinity: A Study in the Doctrine of the Triune God*, 74.

⁴⁹ Michael Vial, *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*.

that dehumanize others". Courageous compassion, therefore, is not only about helping individuals in need but also about challenging the systems that perpetuate inequality and suffering. This kind of boldness in action is crucial in breaking the cycles of injustice that perpetuate pain.⁵⁰

Moreover, courageous compassion is often intertwined with the idea of sacrificial love. In many cases, acting compassionately requires personal sacrifice, whether it's time, resources, or reputation. It may mean sacrificing one's own comfort for the well-being of others, as seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Here, the Samaritan acts with bold compassion, stopping to help a wounded man even though it puts him at risk. This story exemplifies the Christian call to love boldly, even when it comes at a personal cost. As Moltmann⁵¹ suggests, "The true measure of compassion is not how it makes us feel, but how it transforms the world around us through sacrificial action". This sacrificial nature of compassion is essential to its boldness and effectiveness.

Courageous compassion is a reflection of God's love for humanity. In the Bible, God's compassion is often described as fierce and unrelenting, especially in the face of human sin and suffering. God's ultimate act of compassionate love was demonstrated through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, a bold act of love that reconciled humanity to God. As such, courageous compassion reflects the heart of God, who calls His followers to love others as He has loved them. It is a divine love that is bold, sacrificial, and transformative, challenging Christians to live out this love in every aspect of their lives. As Jenson⁵² reminds us, "God's love is not a passive feeling, but an active commitment that involves suffering and sacrifice for the sake of others". Courageous compassion, therefore, is not just a matter of feeling sympathy for those who suffer, but of participating in their redemption through self-giving love.

The Trinity: Connecting Contemplation, Community, and Compassion

The doctrine of the Trinity serves as a foundational framework in Christian theology, illustrating the nature of God as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—united in one divine essence. This relational and dynamic unity is not merely a theological

⁵⁰ Steven Tubagus & Timotius Bakti Sarono. "Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan (Holy Spirit in the Trinity and Community of God's People)": 85-95.

⁵¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 119.

⁵² Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1: The Triune God*, 153.

abstraction but shapes the way Christians engage in their spiritual practices, communal life, and acts of compassion. The Trinity provides a model for Christian existence, inviting believers into a deeper understanding of God's love and the relational dynamics of the divine life. As Moltmann⁵³ explains, "The Triune God is a community of love and mutual indwelling, and Christians are invited into that communion". This dynamic interplay between unity and diversity in the Godhead mirrors the interconnectedness of contemplation, community, and compassion.⁵⁴

Contemplation is a critical practice for connecting with God and participating in the divine life. In the Trinitarian understanding, contemplation is more than a solitary practice; it is a means by which believers enter into the relational life of the Trinity. Through contemplative prayer, Christians are invited into the union between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, experiencing a deep connection with God's love and presence. As Fiddes⁵⁵ argues, "Contemplation is the practice of resting in God's presence, where one encounters the love and grace that bind the Trinity together". This union is not only about individual spiritual growth but is also a communal act that links believers with the broader community of faith, reflecting the unity of the Triune God.⁵⁶

The Trinitarian nature of God also informs Christian community. Just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in perfect unity and diversity, so too is the Church called to live out this unity in diversity. Paul's metaphor of the body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 illustrates how believers, though distinct in gifts and roles, are one in Christ. This community reflects the diversity within the unity of the Trinity, where every member contributes to the whole.⁵⁷ The unity of the Christian community is not based on uniformity but on a shared relationship with the Triune God, which fosters mutual care, support, and love among believers.⁵⁸

Christian community, grounded in the love of the Triune God, is a space where believers practice the love that is demonstrated within the Godhead. The Father's love for the Son, the Son's submission to the Father, and the Spirit's role in binding them together

⁵³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 92.

⁵⁴ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*, 57; Karen Kilby, *God, Evil and the Limits of Theology*. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 101.

⁵⁵ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*, 57.

⁵⁶ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*; Thomas B. Saron & Tubagus Suhendra. "Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan": 1–15.

⁵⁷ Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*, 101; Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and the Trinity: A Study in the Doctrine of the Triune God*, 74.

⁵⁸ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society: A Theological Vision for Contemporary Challenges*, 64.

form the basis of Christian community.⁵⁹ As Rohr⁶⁰ notes, “The life of the Trinity is a constant exchange of love and submission, a dance of self-giving, and the Christian community is called to reflect this same pattern of selfless love”. This communal love is lived out through acts of service, care, and mutual submission, where Christians not only experience God’s love but also extend it to others in the same way the Triune persons extend love to each other.⁶¹

Compassion, in the Trinitarian framework, is a relational action that flows from the love shared between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Triune God’s compassion is exemplified through the Son’s Incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, which are acts of self-giving love for the salvation of humanity.⁶² As Vial⁶³ states, “God’s compassion is the foundation of Christian compassion; it is through the Triune God’s love that Christians are called to show mercy and justice”. In this sense, Christian compassion is not just an emotional response but a transformative action that seeks to heal brokenness and restore wholeness in the world, as modeled by the life of Christ.⁶⁴

Courageous compassion, therefore, becomes an extension of the Trinitarian love that calls Christians to step into the world’s suffering. Just as the Father sent the Son to reconcile the world to Himself, so too are believers called to embody this self-sacrificial love in the world.⁶⁵ Compassionate acts of love often require risk, discomfort, and sacrifice, yet they reflect the boldness of the Triune God, whose love is not limited by the boundaries of self-interest but extends to all creation.⁶⁶ As Bonhoeffer⁶⁷ writes, “The Church must not be the center of the world’s suffering, but its presence and its mission are to serve as an answer to it”. In this way, compassionate acts are transformative not

⁵⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 121; Michael Vial, *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*.

⁶⁰ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*; Thomas B. Sarono & Tubagus Suhendra. “Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan”: 1–15.

⁶¹ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and the Trinity: A Study in the Doctrine of the Triune God*, 75.

⁶² Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society: A Theological Vision for Contemporary Challenges*, 67.

⁶³ Michael Vial, *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*.

⁶⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 119; Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1: The Triune God*, 93.

⁶⁵ Karen Kilby, *Suffering and the Christian Life*, 123; Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and the Trinity: A Study in the Doctrine of the Triune God*, 140.

⁶⁶ Michael Vial, *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*; Peter Mark Tyler. “Raising the Soul in Love: St Ignatius of Loyola and the Tradition of Mystical Theology”: 1015.

⁶⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 81.

only for the individuals who receive them but also for the communities and systems that are healed and made whole.⁶⁸

The Trinity provides the ultimate model for how contemplation, community, and compassion intersect in the life of the believer. Through contemplation, Christians enter into the relational love of the Trinity and participate in God's divine life.⁶⁹ Through community, they live out the unity and diversity of the Triune God, supporting one another in love and service. And through compassion, they embody the self-giving love of God, reaching out to the broken, the marginalized, and the suffering with boldness and grace. As Fiddes⁷⁰ reflects, "The Trinity is not a mere theological idea but the foundation of the Christian life, which is lived out in love, service, and compassion". The interconnectedness of these three dimensions reflects the very essence of God's love and calls Christians to live accordingly, participating in the eternal dance of love within the Godhead.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Trinity is not just a theological doctrine but a foundational model for Christian life. By examining the connections between contemplation, community, and compassion through the lens of the Triune God, we see how these elements are intricately woven together in the Christian faith. Contemplation invites believers into the loving, relational life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, allowing them to experience God's presence and love in a transformative way. Community, rooted in the Trinitarian understanding of unity and diversity, fosters mutual care and support, reflecting the relational nature of God. Compassion, as a courageous expression of love, challenges believers to engage with the world's suffering, embodying the self-giving love of the Triune God.

Ultimately, living out the principles of contemplation, community, and compassion enables Christians to reflect the very nature of God in their daily lives. The Trinity, as a dynamic relationship of love and mutual indwelling, provides the model for how

⁶⁸ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1: The Triune God*, 95.

⁶⁹ Edward M. MacKinnon, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Teaching*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); William Lane Craig. "What's the Difference Between Classical and Social, Relational Trinitarianism?"

⁷⁰ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*, 67.

⁷¹ Steven Tubagus & Timotius Bakti Sarono. "Roh Kudus dalam Trinitas dan Komunitas Umat Tuhan (Holy Spirit in the Trinity and Community of God's People)": 85-95.

Christians are called to engage with God, each other, and the world. By participating in this divine life, believers are empowered to live with purpose and boldness, carrying the message of hope and transformation that the Triune God exemplifies. As they continue to embody these aspects of faith, Christians contribute to the ongoing work of reconciliation, healing, and justice in a broken world.

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