

The Trinity

The Trinity is Who God Is, Not What God Does

- The Trinity is God, not just an abstraction model.
- For our opening prayer, we will look at and think about a famous icon of the Trinity by Andrei Rubilev. This icon depicts a visit by three men to Abraham in Genesis 18:1-15. In this visit the Lord revealing his will to make Abraham the father of the Israeli people. Rubilev portrays these visitors as the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- In most interpretations, the Father is at our left, the Son in the middle and the Holy Spirit at our right. Does it matter which is which?
- What else do you see in this icon? What strikes you and what questions does it raise? What do these three figures tell us about the Trinity?

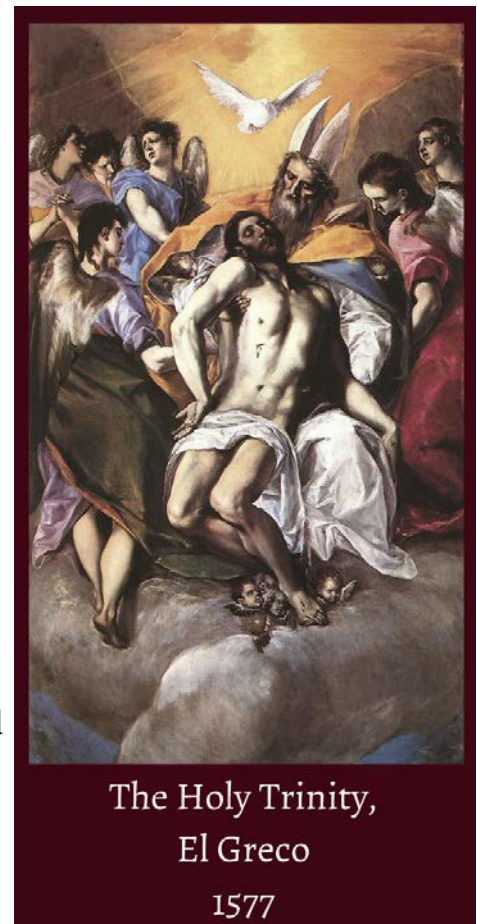


The Trinity is three but not divided

- The bond of love which is the Holy Spirit causes close union in married couples, among close friends, and within the Church. St. Paul writes “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it”. (1 Corinthians 12:26) We are united with Christ through the Church but retain our individuality
- In God this union is perfect. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit indwell together but preserve their distinctiveness
- The Father could not be the Father without the Son. The Son can only be the Son with the Father. The Holy Spirit is the bond between them. Leaving out one person of the Trinity is not an incomplete idea of God, but a wrong idea. We need all three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to understand God
- The Trinity has three persons in the sense that a person is defined by their relationship to others, not their individuality. A person is a mother, a brother, a close friend or a son, not a stack of achievements or preferences. Jesus himself is called Son of God and Son of Man in the Gospels
- We pray **to** the Father, **through** the Son, **in** the Holy Spirit. Notice the prepositions (in bold). God is the object of prayer, the teacher of prayer and the inspiration for prayer. This shows how the persons of the Trinity work together for one purpose
- St. Paul wrote: “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life”. (Titus 3:4-7) The Triune God loves us and draws us into a relationship as His heir.

The Trinity is one but not solitary

- Spiritual ideas such as beauty, truth and goodness harmonize and complement each other and are seamless. The good is beautiful, the beautiful is true and the true is good. They are not independent ideas
- God is complete. He doesn't need us and doesn't use us. The Trinity is not lonely and imperfect. The icon to the right shows the Father accepting the sacrifice of his Son without anger. This is only possible because the Holy Spirit creates a perfect bond in which the Father wills what the Son wills.
- God is wondrous and varied. Understanding Him isn't easy. St. Augustine wrote "If you understand Him, He is not God."
- When we bless in the **name** of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit we are acknowledging God's love which surrounds us and claims us. Notice that "name" is singular because of God's unity.



Why is the Trinity so Complicated?

- Does the Trinity make "sense"?
- Who God is feels unexpected

The Trinity is love

- The Trinity's love creates meaning in the world and in our lives
- The Father is lover; Son is the beloved; Holy Spirit is the love which bonds and unifies. The one God is the three persons of the Trinity unified by love
- The love of God is the Holy Spirit which overflows and reaches out. This is indwelling turned outward and made present to us
- The painting to the left expresses this outreach

HERESIES/CHURCH TEACHING

<i>Heresy</i>	<i>Heretical Teachings</i>	<i>Church's Teaching</i>
Gnosticism	The world is evil. Christ was divine but not human. Select few given "secret teaching" of Christ; salvation is only for some.	The world has both good and evil. Christ is both human and divine. The good news is intended for all. Through Christ, anyone can be saved.
Arianism	Jesus Christ, though the first of God's creations, was not divine.	Jesus Christ is the same substance as the Father ("homousios") and therefore divine and equal to the Father.
Nestorianism	There are two persons in Christ. Mary is the mother of only the human Jesus. Jesus' human nature was absorbed into his divine nature.	Jesus Christ is one divine person. Mary is the Mother of God.
Monophysitism	There is no original sin. A person can be saved without God's help.	Jesus Christ is one divine person with two natures: a human nature and a divine nature.
Pelagianism	The church cannot forgive those guilty of great sins.	Grace is absolutely necessary for personal salvation.
Novatianism & Donatism	The sacraments are not valid when administered by an unworthy priest.	Repentance allows for the forgiveness of sins. Christ is the true minister of the sacraments; the unworthiness of the minister does not affect a sacrament.

The Sacraments draw us into the life of the God

- The Sacraments re-form us in the image of the God
- Christ shows us what man should be by His love and sacrifice on the cross. His example invites us to become what we truly are, images of God
- We are images of God when we love those who, like ourselves, have failed and sinned: the poor, the misguided, the undisciplined
- The Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to inspire us and to invite us into the life of the God. This invitation gives meaning and hope to our lives
- You will be or already are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
- Go back to the icon on the front page. The table that the Trinity sits at in this icon has room for you. Imagine yourself being part of this image
- If you will be baptized at Easter, you are being drawn into the love of the Trinity
- If you are already baptized and will be confirmed, you are offered a deeper relationship with the Trinity. You are being asked to allow God's love to overflow into you and for you to then reach out to others

What is a Sacrament?

Other business?

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became Man.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered, died, and was buried.

On the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His Kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy catholic, and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.