

The Catechism quotes the fourth-century Church father St. Gregory of Nazianzus:

"The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself....By advancing and progressing 'from glory to glory,' the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays."

CCC 684

Step One

First the Father revealed himself to ancient Israel in the Old Testament. In a world that worshiped many gods and goddesses, he taught the ancient Israelites that he was the one and only God who created and rules the world. Even in the Old Testament, however, there were hints of the Trinity. The one God created the world "by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6). The Word (or Wisdom) of God and his life-giving Spirit (or Breath) were active in the Old Testament but not yet recognized as divine persons.

Step Two

Next in this progressive unfolding was the revelation of the Son. The Gospel of John begins with the eternal divine Word:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:1

The Old Testament spoke of God's activity in the world in terms of his living and active Word. This Word has been revealed as God's eternal Son:

"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

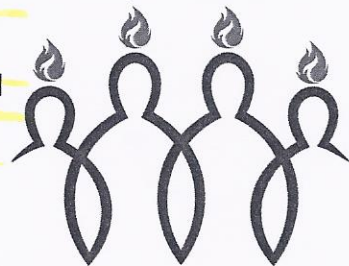
John 1:14

We celebrate the Incarnation, God's becoming flesh and coming to dwell with humanity in the person of Jesus, at Christmas. God is like a father to all creation, but Jesus is the Son in a unique way. The title "Son" of God means that God is not merely "Father" as Creator but in the very life of God there is an eternal Father-Son relationship: Jesus said, "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). The Son and Father are so close they share the one divine nature.

Step Three

The final step is the revelation of the Holy Spirit. In the Son, we begin to glimpse the Spirit. At the baptism of Jesus, there is a manifestation of each person of the Trinity. The Son is baptized. The Father speaks. The Spirit descends as a dove. As Jesus approaches the cross, he begins to speak to his disciples of the promised Spirit he will send (John 14:16–17, 26). Yet the Spirit remains something of a mystery to the apostles until the day of Pentecost.

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is "manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person...On that day, the Holy Trinity is fully revealed" (CCC 731–732).



In the history of salvation, the three persons of the Trinity are revealed in order: Father, Son, and Spirit. In our own lives, there is often a similar process, but we don't always come to know one divine person after another in that same order. Some people come to know Jesus first and later develop a relationship with the Father. It can be difficult to grasp that the Spirit is a divine person. Through prayer, we can come to know the Trinity as a personal presence who guides and helps us.

• How would you describe your relationship to each person of the Trinity? Who did you come to know first: Father, Son, or Spirit?



• Which relationship needs the most growth?