

Trinity of Love

Faith Seeking Understanding

By



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For thousands of years people have been trying to describe and name their experience of God. This has been done in word, in song and in paintings and other art forms. But no matter how hard we try, we cannot really describe God with complete accuracy. What we can do, however, is try to capture the essence of God. Although we can't know God fully in an intellectual way we can know God with our heart in an emotional way and I believe this is God's greatest desire for us. To enter into an intimate relationship, be swept up in the loving relationship that *is* God.

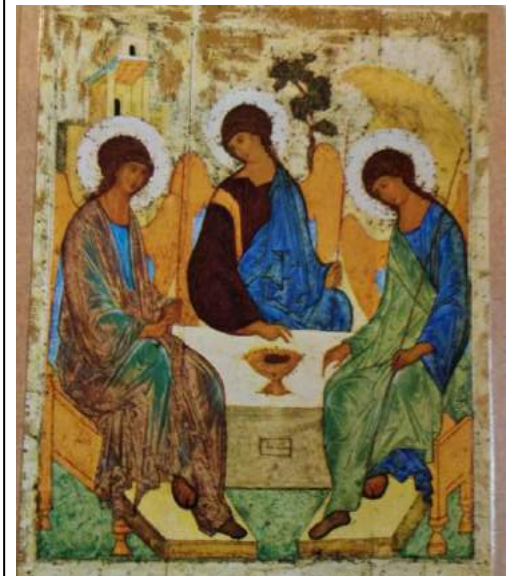
The words used in the bible give us glimpses of the way people have tried to convey their understanding and experience of God. In some ways these writers were like poets; they used the poetic words that were at their disposal at the time to convey what they wanted to say about God. For example today if we were trying to explain how "all knowing" God is, we might say something like God is smarter than Google and Siri and Explorer and all the search engines put together. But these are not words that would have been around thousands of years ago so you won't find them in the bible: people use the best words that are available to them at the time.

The word **Trinity** cannot be found in the bible either; it was a term that was invented in the third century by a theologian called Tertullian in an attempt to describe God. It comes from the Latin *trinitas* meaning 'triad' or *trinus* meaning 'threefold'. Since then theologians have been trying to explain what it means. Each time we make the sign of the cross we acknowledge the Trinity, but how *do* we explain this Trinitarian threefold God of ours, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? The Trinity is not three separate beings with three personalities, but is three persons in one; however this is a very difficult concept! *Persons* in the Trinity doesn't have the same meaning as our contemporary term *personality*. However if we don't use personal language for God then there is the risk of reducing God to an impersonal being with no feelings. Using the word Trinity allows us to capture so much more in our understanding of God, it allows us to see the *more* of God, it allows us to see the **Trinity of Love** which *is* God.

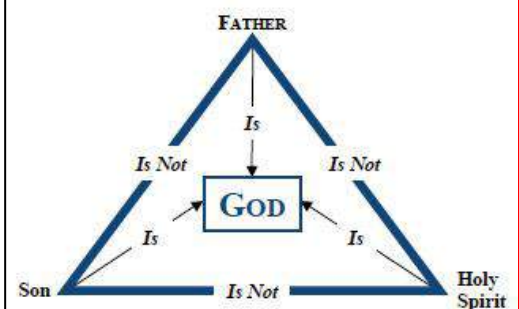
The persons of the Trinity share a unique relationship which is unlike any other. Each person of the Trinity has their own traits and unique otherness; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is what makes it Trinity. If there were no otherness there would be no Trinity. The early Fathers of the church dared to describe the Trinity as a Divine circle dance, the Greek word used for this is *perichoresis*, this is the origin of our word choreography. I really like this description as it describes the love that flows from a never ending dance of loving relationship that we are all invited to join in. God is a God of relationship. All three persons of the Trinity co-exist in a never ending dance of love. This perfect relationship of Love is the model that the Church is invited to imitate. As a Christian community we are invited into a loving relationship and we in turn are asked to invite *others* into this loving relationship. So let's dance!



The Trinity: Peter Paul Rubens painting 1577-1640



The Trinity, Andrei Rublev c1411



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