

# THREE-IN-ONE

## Most Holy Trinity



Catholics make the sign of the cross each time we begin to pray. ***“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”***. Some of us do it so routinely and even mechanically, that the meaning and impact is lost. Some even do it so irreverently and speedily that at one glance it seems like they’re chasing some flies away from their faces. When done slowly and reverently, we truly invoke the Holy Trinity by inviting

the Father, Son and Holy Spirit into our sacred space of prayer.

***What does it mean to say, “I believe in the Holy Trinity”?*** This is an important question to explore on Trinity Sunday. The Catechism says, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is ***“the central mystery of Christian faith and life.”*** (CCC, 234)

The entire tenet as Catholic Christians about salvation rests on the reality – that is to say, the existence – of the Blessed Trinity. If there is no Trinity, then Jesus Christ was certainly not the divine and only-begotten Son of God. Jesus would simply be an ordinary, finite human person, whose actions were only ordinary and finite – like yours and mine. That means Jesus was incapable of making atonement for the sins of the entire human race. Because only a DIVINE PERSON whose actions have INFINITE value could atone for the sins of the whole world and bring forgiveness and salvation to the entire human race.

To say we believe in the Blessed Trinity also means that we believe everything we profess in the Nicene Creed every Sunday and Solemnity, and in the Apostles' Creed when we recite the Rosary.

To say we believe in the Blessed Trinity means we believe that there is only one God, but that He exists in three distinct divine Persons. Thus, the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God; however, the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, and the Father is not the Spirit. They are not three gods; rather, they are one God, because they have one and the same divine nature. Confusing? Perhaps - but true nonetheless! The Trinity is not optional. It's not a doctrine we can be hazy on. Because if you're going to know God better - if you're going to go deeper in your relationship with God – we need to understand the Holy Trinity. And not just understand it – we need to experience the Holy Trinity.

## Who exactly is the Holy Trinity?

Holy Trinity is the Christian name for God. We can sum it up with **Four Words** to know the core of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

**The first word is ONE.** There is only one God. The Bible was written at a time in which every country and even every household had its god or gods. Many cultures have fallen into polytheism. So there were plenty of gods to choose from. But the writers of the Bible say consistently, from beginning to end, that there is only ONE God.

Deuteronomy: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) To believe in the Holy Trinity, we have to believe that there is only ONE God.



**The second word is THREE.** This one God is not a lonely King. This God, in His very nature, always has been, and always will be, three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A community of three in complete unity.

We see this in many parts of the bible. In Matthew 28:18-19 “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Notice that when Jesus sends out his disciples, he says: Baptise them into the name of God, which is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Bring people into the same Community of love that I live in. That's what it means to be His true disciple.



**The third word is COMMUNITY.** It is interesting to read the Bible where we find many analogies, parables or comparisons about the Kingdom of God. What about the Holy Trinity? Over the years Christians have come up with various analogies of the Holy Trinity. We have probably heard that the Holy Trinity is like water, which can come in 3 forms: ice, water, and steam. Or the classical explanation taught by St Patrick about the Holy Trinity using the cloverleaf, where we have 3 leaves in 1 clover. If these analogies help us - great. But the problem with analogies like these is that they are all impersonal. They use inanimate objects, while the Holy Trinity is personal. It's Super-personal. It's a community of love among three persons, perfect unity born out of a Trinitarian Love.

At the origin of Creation, God says, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness ...” (Genesis 1:26).

Monsignor Francesco Follo beautifully expressed, “One God in three persons: God is not solitude but communion, the ocean of His being vibrates with an infinite movement of love, reciprocity, exchange, encounter, family and celebration ... In front of the revelation of the Trinity not only silence but also wonder and joy are required because this is indeed a reality inaccessible and infinitely greater than we are, but it is at the same time a shining reality. Man himself is all lit up by it in the mind and in the heart, in contemplation and in action.” (Lectio Divina: Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year A).

To understand better the Holy Trinity, we need not only the words of Sacred Scripture but *Holy Images*. An image is worth more than a thousand words. One image that has helped many to enter into the Trinitarian mystery is the famous Icon of the Holy Trinity by Russian painter Andrei Rublev. The icon introduces us to the threshold of the Mystery of God.



**(Rublev's Icon)**

Rublev's image because it depicts in an extraordinary way what lies at the heart of our Triune God. The Father gazes lovingly towards the Son. The Son is looking obediently towards the Father and the Holy Spirit is that breadth of love between the Father and the Son. We could say that God's nature reveals itself in the dynamic relations among the divine persons. It is in the self-emptying (kenosis) and gazing at the other that the transcendence of God becomes manifest.

The image of the Holy Trinity reflects a time when we experience a community of love. Maybe in a family when it is most united, harmonious and loving. A sport team when people stopped worrying about their own egos. A support group when we felt cared for in spite of our limitations. Because to experience the Holy Trinity is to experience a community of love, the parable of communion.

We see that in the Holy Trinity there's no jealousy, no politics, no power plays? The reason we can't find many good analogies and images for the Trinity is that we constantly live in such broken relationships that it's hard for us to imagine a Community in which there's constant joy and creativity and each Person pouring himself out for the other. It will not be too far-fetched to say, *“God is a party, and we are invited.”*

**The fourth word is UNITY.** God is a Community in Unity. God is a COMMUNITY in that God exists as three persons, and those persons are distinct. Common-unity.

The Father glorifies the Son. The Son gives glory to the Father. The Spirit knows the thoughts of God and prays to God for our sake. The Father has all authority, yet He gives that authority to the Son, and the Spirit speaks on God's authority. Meanwhile, the Son lives in absolute obedience to the Father, for the Son does only what He sees the Father doing. And the Spirit is sent by the Father in the name of Jesus. No competition, only united collaboration. Imagine if our parish communities were built and modelled on this concept of the Trinity – Trinitarian Love. All equal and co-equals, working to bring about God's Kingdom, not one's own little kingdom.

The Triune God share the same nature. Each one is God, each one is majestic and glorious, yet there's no infighting. They live together, forever, in love. No one has an ego problem. No one's going to get mad and walk out on the relationship. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in unity as one God, forever. Trinity means relationship and it is being in relationship that love can be manifested.

Today let us remember these four important words: **ONE, THREE, COMMUNITY, UNITY.** When our hearts and mind are set on fire, we would say, "Wow!" This God I worship is more personal, more amazing and more loving than we could ever have imagined.

## Reflect & Share

1. What is my understanding of the Trinity?
2. How do I relate to each of the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity?
3. What does being in a right relationship with God and our neighbour look like? (at home, at work)

While the workings of the Trinity challenge our understanding, Bible-believing Christians cannot let themselves downplay the Trinity or ignore it. We find the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each present throughout the pages of Scripture--and each equally deserving of our love and reverence



# The prayer to the Trinity

(by St Elizabeth of the Trinity, Carmelite nun)

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to become utterly forgetful of myself so that I may establish myself in you, as changeless and calm as though my soul were already in eternity. Let nothing disturb my peace nor draw me forth from you, O my unchanging God, but at every moment may I penetrate more deeply into the depths of your mystery. Give peace to my soul; make it your heaven, your cherished dwelling-place and the place of your repose. Let me never leave you there alone, but keep me there, wholly attentive, wholly alert in my faith, wholly adoring and fully given up to your creative action.

O my beloved Christ, crucified for love, I long to be the bride of your heart. I long to cover you with glory, to love you even unto death! Yet I sense my powerlessness and beg you to clothe me with yourself. Identify my soul with all the movements of your soul, submerge me, overwhelm me, substitute yourself for me, so that my life may become a reflection of your life. Come into me as Adorer, as Redeemer and as Saviour. O Eternal Word, utterance of my God, I want to spend my life listening to you, to become totally teachable so that I might learn all from you. Through all darkness, all emptiness, all powerlessness, I want to keep my eyes fixed on you and to remain under your great light.

O my Beloved Star, so fascinate me that I may never be able to leave your radiance. O Consuming Fire, Spirit of Love, overshadow me so that the Word may be, as it were incarnate again in my soul. May I be for him a new humanity in which he can renew all his mystery. And you, O Father, bend down towards your poor little creature. Cover her with your shadow, see in her only your beloved son in who you are well pleased

O my `Three', my All, my Beatitude, infinite Solitude, Immensity in which I lose myself, I surrender myself to you as your prey. Immerse yourself in me so that I may be immersed in you until I go to contemplate in your light the abyss of your splendour!

