“Comprehending the Trinity as a adult is hard enough; how do we explain it to children? We can talk about the many ways we know God...”

The Doctrine of the Trinity
The Trinity is the belief that God is revealed to us in three persons existing in a mutual relationship of love. It is the total revelation of God: God the Father as Creator; God the Son as Redeemer; God the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier and Comforter. Our understanding of the Trinity arises from the biblical, credal, and doctrinal statements that emerged from the creative struggles of theologians in the church to understand and talk about the nature of God.

Discussing the Trinity with Children
Comprehending the Trinity as a adult is hard enough; how do we explain it to children? We can talk about the many ways we know God:

- We see God’s creation all around us;
- We learn of God’s love for everyone from Jesus’ life and teachings;
- We feel the power and strength of God’s Spirit within us;
- We know God’s love in the community of the church.

Depending on your tradition, children may see the sign of the cross when people pray, cross themselves, or genuflect. In this way, children see an outward and visible proclamation that we rely on the gift of the Holy Trinity to be a part of our lives. We often use objects to talk about the Trinity: liquid forms = water, ice, steam; shamrocks with three leaves; parts of an apple = skin, flesh, seeds. How about using a sacred image to explain a sacred concept?

A Lesson on the Trinity
A wonderful way to encourage children to see the work of the Holy Trinity is to use Rublev’s Icon of the Trinity. Invite a conversation with the following guide:

*Six hundred years ago not many people went to school. Not many kids learned how to read and write. And if you don’t know how to read and write, then you wouldn’t be able to read a Bible. So to help people understand God 600 years ago, church ministers used*
to paint pictures so that people who couldn’t read and write could still learn about God. What can we learn about God from this picture? How many people are in this picture? All three people have exactly the same circle, the same “halo” (nimbus) around their heads. That’s the glow of God. Now these three people are wearing four colors – green; brown; blue; gold. Six hundred years ago, blue was the color people painted God. Blue was God’s color. Three people, all with circle halos around their heads. All wearing blue, the color of God. So the painter of this picture was saying that these three people are God.

What are the three people holding? They are all holding a long stick. Exactly the same length. Look at their hands. What hand is holding the stick? All three right hands are holding the stick. Now look at their other hands; all the left hands have two fingers pointing down. We can see that the painter is saying that these people are the same; same halos; same blue, the color for God; same way of holding a staff in the same right hand; same way of point their fingers. Three people, who are God, who are all exactly the same.

Yet as well as being exactly the same, these three people are also different. One person has green, the side closest to us. Green is the color of spring, the color of things that grow; that green person is the Holy Spirit of God – who wants you, and this church, to be green and grow. One person has brown. Brown is the color of dirt. That brown person is Jesus, who came to earth, put his feet on the ground, felt dirt between his feet. One person is gold. That person is God the Father; gold because of the beauty and God who created a beautiful earth. The painter is using a picture to tell us about God. That God is three persons: Spirit in green to help us grow; Jesus in brown walking in the dirt; the Father in gold who created this beautiful earth.

Invite children to respond either through prayer, art, or song, such as creating their own icon.


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