

THE CONSECRATION OF THE ICON OF THE BLESSED TRINITY  
ST. COLUMBA'S, INVERNESS  
TRINITY SUNDAY 2025



## *Visio Divina*

### A Meditation on Rublev's Trinity Icon

#### Place, Date & Artist

'The Trinity' is believed to have been 'written' about 1410 at the Lavra [monastery] of Saint Sergius located about 43 miles NE of Moscow. Nikon, the second abbot of the monastery, asked a fellow monk, Andrei Rublev, to write an image of the Holy Trinity in praise of the monastery's newly-built Trinity Cathedral.

#### Original Icon

The original icon measures 56 x 48 inches, and is painted in egg tempera on wooden board. It became one of the monastery's most venerated sacred objects and was displayed on the Trinity Cathedral's iconostasis, to the right of the Royal Doors leading to the altar.

#### Biblical Inspiration

Rublev's icon was inspired by the story of the Hospitality of Abraham in Genesis 18:1-15:

<sup>1</sup>The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup>He looked up and saw **three men** standing near him. When he saw **them**, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. <sup>3</sup>He said, "**My lord**, if I find favor with **you**, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup>Let a little water be brought, and wash **your** feet, and rest **yourselves** under the tree. <sup>5</sup>Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that **you** may pass on—since **you** have come to your servant." So **they said**, "Do as you have said." <sup>6</sup>And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." <sup>7</sup>Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. <sup>8</sup>Then he took curds and milk and the calf that

he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

<sup>9</sup>They said to him, “Where is your wife, Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” <sup>10</sup>Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. <sup>11</sup>Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. <sup>12</sup>So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” <sup>13</sup>The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ <sup>14</sup>Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” <sup>15</sup>But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

This narrative becomes the backdrop of the icon as a symbolic representation of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity – One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### Features of the Icon

The composition of the icon is based on three ‘angels’ (or ‘Persons’ of the Trinity) depicted in a circular arrangement around a table, while at the same time opening out to the viewer and inviting us in. The androgynous figures are identified from left to right as the “First, Second, and Third Person of the Trinity’ (i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Naturally, their haloes depict their shared holiness and their faces are youthful, yet mature and serene. These similarities, along with their hair style, their identical size, and the singular throne they share symbolize



their equality. While three in number, their wings, which envelop them all, are touching one another as a sign of their eternal oneness. We might then observe each figure in turn.

THE FATHER (LEFT): His outer mantle shimmers gold and iridescent colors as a symbol of the Eternal and Uncreated Light of God. Beneath his mantle is an azure blue garment symbolizing divinity in the Eastern Orthodox church. Thus, this same blue appears in all three figures as a sign of their equal divinity but is most veiled here in the Father figure, symbolizing his absolute Transcendence. While he gestures toward the chalice in blessing, his hand does not touch the table. While his staff, held in *both* hands, points downward toward the footstool that all three figures share – a symbol of the Earth as in Isaiah 66:1:

“Thus says the LORD: Heaven is my throne  
and the earth is my footstool;  
what is the house that you would build for me,  
and what is my resting place?” (Isaiah 66:1)

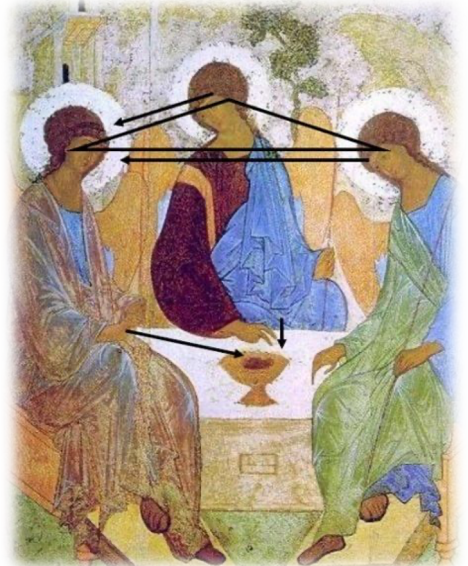
THE SON (CENTER): As the Incarnate One his outer mantle is azure blue as he is the one who most clearly reveals Divinity to us. The reddish brown of his undergarment represents his bodiliness and blood of his sacrifice, while the gold sash represents his identity as King and High Priest. He holds his staff in his left hand with his right hand free. His hand lays upon the table as he blesses the chalice with two fingers pointed outward symbolizing his human and divine natures.

THE SPIRIT (RIGHT): The outer mantle of the Spirit is green symbolizing life and creation, while he too has the blue undergarment of divinity. He holds his staff in his left hand leaving his right hand free, also in a gesture of blessing the chalice.



## The Unity of Persons

Taken together we see that the Son and Spirit incline their heads toward the figure of the Father in a sign of deference to the “monarchy” of the Father, who in turn looks to the Spirit. The term monarchy (literally “one beginning”) refers to the Father as the source of unity in the Trinity. From Him the Word (Christ) is spoken in silence from all eternity, riding on the breath of the Spirit. As each gazes upon the other, we are reminded of the perichoreses, the mutual and eternal *indwelling*, (or ‘dancing around’) of the persons of the Trinity within the other.



Notice the right arm of Christ and the left arm of the Spirit are free because they represent the two arms of the Father through which creation and redemption are brought about.

The chalice on the table contains the head of a calf. This is symbolic of the bull that was supplied by God in place of the sacrifice of Isaac, and thus becomes a symbol of the Christian Eucharist, the sacrifice of the



New Covenant and the holy sacrament of Communion. The astute observer will notice a “chalice within a chalice” both of which have Christ at the center. It is Christ, sent by the Spirit, who reveals the Father and offers his life in sacrifice for the world. Thus, the center of both chalices hold the sacrificial love of God poured out for the world. Some have seen here the ‘moment’ in Eternity when the Triune God determined to bring about the Incarnation as we pray: “Carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation...”



## The Background

Behind each of the figures is a symbol, from left to right: the House of Abraham, the Oak Tree of Mamre, the Peak of the Mount of Sacrifice.

THE HOUSE: Rising up behind the Father, recalls Jesus' saying: "In my Father's house are many rooms" (Jn 14:2). With its doors open, it represents divine hospitality, openness, and welcome, also reflected in the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah to the three Angels in the Genesis narrative.

THE OAK OF MAMRE: Rising behind the Son and, like him, inclining toward the Father. The tree serves as a symbol of the Tree of Life in Eden and the Wood of the Cross on Calvary, where Christ transforms this tree of death into a Tree of Life.

THE MOUNTAIN PEAK: Rising behind the Holy Spirit, and also bowing towards the glory of the Father is a symbol of the Earth: "Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created and you shall renew the face of the Earth." (Ps. 104:30). The mountain is also a privileged place of encounter with God where heaven and earth embrace one another as they did when Moses encountered God on the mountain.

*Source for Trinity Photos with geometric overlays: St Thomas Aquinas Parish, access, June 3, 2025: <https://www.stthomasderry.org/rublevs-trinity-explained>*

*The Sermon was followed by a consecration of the Icon of the Blessed Trinity using the service below.*



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*Presider:* ☩ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ***Amen.***

*Presider:* Thine own of thine own we offer unto you, O Lord.  
***All things come from you and return to you.***

*Presider:* Prosper the work of our hands;  
***Prosper our handiwork.***

*Presider:* Reveal to your servants all your holy works;  
***And your splendor to all your children.***

*Presider:* O Divine Lord of all that exists, you illuminate your Holy Church with the gift of icons, revealing your beauty and grace through all of Creation. As your Christ became the icon of your invisible Mystery, so may your Church become an icon of Christ in the world, through whom and for whom all things were made. ***Amen.***

*Presider:* The Word was made flesh.  
***And dwelt among us.***

***Priest extends hands and blesses icon with Holy Oil:***

*Presider:* Almighty God, whose Son our Savior manifested your glory in his flesh, and sanctified the outward and visible to be a means to perceive realities unseen: Accept, bless, and make holy, we pray, this icon of your Holy Triune Majesty. Most Holy Trinity, ☩ Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we praise and glorify your undivided unity.

May your abiding love be manifested through the beauty of this icon; may those who gaze upon it see a glimmer of your Eternity; may those who sit silently in its presence, be reminded of your abiding presence ever with us. We humbly beseech you: Bless this icon reflecting the Mystery your Triune glory; sanctify it with your divine grace, and grace us with its beauty. May this holy icon, created to the glory of your Name be a source of comfort, inspiration, and devotion to all who behold it. Through the intercession of Mary, the Ever-Blessed Mother of God, St. Columba of Iona, and all the Saints of Light who have magnified your name in ages past, and who gaze now upon your Triune glory throughout eternity, grant this, our request in gratitude, O God, for your infinite love and mercy. ***Amen.***

***The Priest incenses the icon:***



*Presider. ☩ Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One;  
Have mercy on us.*

*Presider. ☩ Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One;  
Have mercy on us.*

*Presider. ☩ Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One;  
Have mercy on us. Amen.*

*Presider. Blessed be God always, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages!  
Amen!*

*The Priest blesses icon with Holy Water:*

*☩ Glory to the Three-in-One and One-in-Three, now and ever and unto ages of ages.  
Amen.*

Lord, have mercy.  
*Lord, have mercy.*

Christ, have mercy.  
*Christ, have mercy.*

Lord, have mercy.  
*Lord, have mercy.*

*☩ Glory to the Eternal Majesty, Holy Incarnate One, and Holy Spirit,  
Now and forever, unto ages of ages. Amen.*