



Summoning the Divine Meditation June 7, 2020: THE HOLY TRINITY

[Due to its three petals, the fleur-de-lis has been used to represent the Holy Trinity.]

Genesis 18:1-5. The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. ³ He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say." ⁶ Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get...the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread." ⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ He ...set these before them. While they ate, he stood....

Suggestions for Summoning the Divine Meditations are included at the end of this 3-page reading.

1. Iconic *Trinity* Writers: Andrei Rublev (c. 1365-1430) & Italian Carlos Dolci (c. 1616-1698)



LEFT: Rublev *Trinity* icon also known as *Hospitality of Abraham*) is the most famous of all Russian icons. Next to it is a small, modern version of Rublev's *Trinity*. In Rublev's icon, all three Angels are equal, conforming to the strict rules of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (*Троица* in Russian)

A. Icons are visual equivalents of Holy Scriptures & serve as interactive pathways into the divine. Through the holiness of the iconographer & his or her sacred vision, we move into the icon, becoming part of the mystery. Although ancient rabbis pondered the 3 angels who received Abraham & Sarah's generous hospitality, it took centuries later, the incarnation of Jesus, and an icon writer like Rublev had the gift to link Hebrew Scripture with the Holy Trinity.

B. Comment. Seated at a stone table are 3 winged figures. The middle figure sits on the earth; the other 2 sit on chairs. All hold slender staffs (a sign of power). The visible wing edges of the figures on the left & right touch the two-winged figure in the middle, thus forming a semi-cycle. Beneath the feet of the 2 figures sitting left and right are rectangular slabs reminding us of the Harrowing of Hell in Orthodox iconography when Christ smashes the Gates of Hell and delivers

humanity from death's dominion. The figures of angels are arranged so that the lines of their bodies form a full circle.

In the center, we see the Son. His gesture of 2 fingers on the table and 3 fingers folded under his palm suggests the two natures of Jesus Christ in one person as well as the hidden mystery of the Trinity. Above and behind the 3 figures, from left to right, we find a building (**Abraham's dwelling**), a tree (**Oak of Mamre**) & a mountain (**Mount Moriah** or Mount Tabor). On the table is a **bowl**. Each represents a connection & transformation of Hebrew into Christian scripture.

1. **Abraham's Dwelling** becomes the eternal, heavenly kingdom.

2. The **tree (Oak of Mamre)** symbolically represents the tree of life, Jesse's root, and the Crucifixion Cross. *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, & a Branch shall grow out of his roots* (: [Isaiah 11:1 KJV](#), Latin Vulgate Bible), Jesus is the *Virga Jesse* or *stem of Jesse*.

3. **Mount.** *Mount Tabor:* In the Byzantine view, the Transfiguration is not only a feast in honor of Jesus, but a feast of the Holy Trinity, for all three Persons are present. God the Father speaks from heaven; God the Son is the one being transfigured, and God the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a cloud. The reference could also include [Mount Moriah](#), the place where Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God (See Genesis 22).

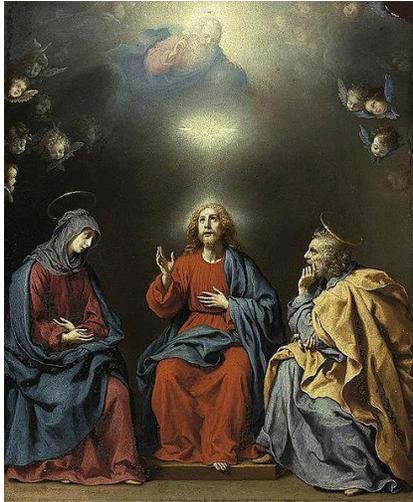
4. **The Bowl.** In Hebrew scripture, the bowl contains the tender, roasted flesh of a young calf; in Rublev's icon, the bowl is transformed as the Eucharistic Chalice.

Here's one interpreter's effort to determine which is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He uses color and the nature of the holy figure. While facing the icon on page 1, you would move from right to left.

1. Right: The **Holy Spirit's** garment is the sky's clear blue, wrapped over with a robe of a green. Thus, the Spirit of creation moves in sky and water, breathes in heaven and earth. All living things owe their freshness to his touch.

2. Middle: The **Son** has the deepest colors; a heavy garment of reddish-brown and a cloak of the blue of heaven. He unites heaven and earth; the two natures (human & divine) are present in him. Over his right shoulder there is a band of gold shot through the earthly garment, as his divinity suffuses and transfigures his earthly being.

3. Left: The **Father** seems to wear colors in a fabric that changes with light and that cannot be described or confined in words. **Source:** Italicized quotations come from ideas generated by the following source which generated by the following source. <https://www.sacredheartpullman.org/documents/2017/8/Trinityicon.pdf>



**Carlos Dolci
(1616-1686)**

Florence, Italy



Left: *Holy Family & Holy Ghost*, 1630

Middle: *Two Self-Portraits*, c. 1674

Right: *The Trinity in Glory*, c. 1670.

Short biography. The grandson of a painter, Dolci was born in Florence. His lifelong nickname was Carlino (little Carlo) because of his short stature and humble character. He apprenticed at a young age and opened his own workshop in Florence at 16. He was unusually precise in his painting. According to his biographer: *He would take weeks over a single foot.* Since his painstaking technique made him unsuited for large-scale fresco painting; Carlino mostly painted small subjects. As he matured, he became inspired by the Counter-Reformation teaching and dedicated himself almost totally to painting religious subjects.

Note: The Protestant reformation (particularly Martin Luther's posting of the 95 theses in 1517). The controversy also led to the founding of the Jesuits, reform of the papacy, and the Council of Trent. The Catholic Church became even more validated and unified.

His sacred subjects were a favorite of Don Lorenzo de' Medici and other powerful persons in Florence. Carlino was extremely pious. If not diligently practicing drawing or developing his painter's craft, he would be praying in the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella. A celebrated and very popular artist in his day, his personal and original interpretation of sacred subjects fell out of favor in the 19th century. His biographer Filippo Baldinucci declares: *When it comes to the art of painting, the world would be less beautiful if every century did not have its Carlino.*

3. About Trinity Sunday (2019 Blog)

David Bennett (Link: <https://www.churchyear.net/trinitysunday.html>)

[Pam's Note. Bennett's overview from this Roman Catholic website is informative and helpful. Bennett also has an interesting discussion of the Nicene Creed as a reflection of the Trinity. Link: <http://www.ancient-future.net/nicene.html>. I have slightly edited his discussion.] Trinity Sunday is one of the few celebrations of the Christian Year that commemorates a reality and doctrine rather than a person or event. On Trinity Sunday, Christians honor the eternal God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Celebrated the Sunday after Pentecost, Trinity Sunday lasts only one day....Eastern Churches have no tradition of Trinity Sunday and insist that they celebrate the Trinity every Sunday. The Trinity is one of the most fascinating--and controversial--Christian teachings.

Described as a mystery, the Trinity is a reality above our human comprehension that we may ultimately experience only through worship, symbol, and faith....The Trinity is described in the Nicene Creed. [Pam's Note: The Episcopal Church includes the Nicene Creed in each Eucharistic Service although the Apostles' Creed is

sometimes used at the Baptismal Service.]the Trinity is the belief that God is **one in essence** (Greek *ousia*), but **distinct in person** (Greek *hypostasis*). The Greek word for person means *that which stands on its own*, or individual reality, and does not mean the persons of the Trinity are 3 human beings. Therefore Christians believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are somehow distinct from one another...yet completely united in will and essence.How can this be? Our two eyes are distinct, yet one and undivided in their sight ... [compare] the Trinity to music. Think of a C-chord. The C, E, and G notes are all distinct notes, but joined together as one a musical chord the sound is richer & more dynamic....Also the chords are all equally important in producing the rich sound, and the sound is lacking and thin if one of the notes is left out....The Son is said to be eternally *begotten* of the Father, while the Holy Spirit is said to *proceed* from the Father through the Son. Each person of the Trinity interpenetrates one another, and each has distinct roles in creation and redemption....

The Church was called to reconcile the Divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit with Jewish monotheism. Overtime, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the Church reflected on the implications of God's nature and began using the word *Trinity* by the middle of the 2nd century....In the 4th century an influential Christian ascetic moralist Arius (c.256 -c. 336), the leader of a Christian community near Alexandria, denied that the Father and Son were both true God and co-eternal. He attracted a large following due to his message of the absolute oneness of the Divinity as the highest perfection; his bishop soon deposed him. The Arian controversy spread, and the emperor Constantine, newly fascinated with Christianity, convened a council of bishops in AD 325 in Nicaea to deal with Arianism. [Pam's Note.

During the Council at Nicaea, the Church drew up the fundamental beginning of the Nicene Creed. In the latter half of that century, the Church dealt with those who specifically denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit and added more text to the creed. The Council declared Arius a heretic after he refused to sign the formula of faith. [Pam's Note: According to the *Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, the Creed was first issued by the Council of Nicaea in 325, but it is frequently thought to have been perfected at the Council of Constantinople in 381.]

4. Hymn: All hail, adorèd Trinity

(Adapted by John D. Champers, sung to the *Doxology*)

Choral Performance Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmzuO3N4bpU>

Verse 1. All hail, adorèd Trinity; All hail, eternal Unity; O God the Father, God the Son, And God the Spirit, ever One. Verse 2. Three Persons praise we evermore. One only God our hearts adore; in Thy sure mercy ever kind may we our true protection find. Verse 3. O Trinity! O Unity! Be present as we worship Thee; and with the songs that angels sing, unite the hymns of praise we bring.

Pam's Note: The word *doxology* comes from the Greek *doxa*, (*glory, splendor, grandeur*) and *logos*, (*word or speaking*). Most doxologies are short hymns of praise to God and are often added to the end of canticles, psalms, and hymns. Almost all of know *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow* written in 1674 by Thomas Ken, a priest in the Church of England. You may have heard the doxology referred to as the *Old Hundredth*. The cadence of Psalm 100 inspired a French hymn in 1558 and, blessed by John Calvin, it part of the liturgical use by the Reformed churches of the city of *Geneva* in the 16th century.

6. Meditation Suggestion: Give yourself the freedom to see what you can imagine!

Dutch Catholic Priest and teacher Henry Nouwen (1932-1996) reflects on Rublev's Icon (1987):

As we place ourselves in front of the icon in prayer, we come to experience a gentle invitation to participate in the intimate conversation, taking place among the 3 divine angels. We join them around the table and come to see with our inner eyes that all... in this world can bear fruit only when it takes place within this divine circle... The more we look at this holy image with the eyes of faith, the more we come to realize that it is painted not as a lovely decoration for a church...but as a holy place to enter and stay within. Did you notice the beautiful circular movement in the icon of Father, Son, and Spirit? The Son and the Spirit incline their heads toward the Father and he directs his gaze back at them. The Father blesses the Son, the Son accepts the cup of sacrifice, the Spirit comforts the Son in his mission, and the Father shows he is pleased with the Son. Love is initiated by the Father, embodied by the Son, and accomplished through the Spirit.

We are welcome in Rublev's icon to sit as part of the table in that includes the Godhead (3-in-1) mystery. Father Nouwen focuses specifically on Rublev's icon, and you may choose to move into that icon and experience its energy and transcendent promise. Or you can become part of either or both of the Dolci Trinity paintings. How do the two Dolci paintings speak to one another? What are the faces in the background? Why are they different in the two paintings? Can you find yourself at home in either or both? And in all of this, how do you respond to the *All Hail adorèd Trinity* hymn? Of course, the final journey into the mystery of the Trinity is your own.