

## Trinity Sunday 2021 B

The story is told of a kindergarten teacher about this time of year, near the end of school when the weather gets nice and children's energy is high. Looking for some activity to keep her students occupied, she handed out paper and markers and told the students to draw a picture of something no one had ever seen before. One girl was especially absorbed in this task and working very hard at it. So the teacher asked, "What are you drawing?" The girl said, "A picture of God!" "That's very good," the teacher said, "but no one knows what God looks like." The student replied, ***"They will when I'm finished."***

Some 600 years ago, a Russian artist named Andrei Rublev addressed that same question of what God looks like in his timeless icon of the Trinity. [PICTURE] He depicts the scene from the Book of Genesis, where God promises Abraham great blessings, a future that depended on a child. As Abraham says: "*O Lord God, what good will your gifts be, if I keep on being childless and have no one to inherit them?*"

Soon after, God visits Abraham and Sarah in the guise of three men, who come to announce the birth of Isaac, faithful to His promise. The couple welcomes their unexpected visitors and offers them hospitality. This is the moment Rublev captures – the three heavenly Guests Who are in fact the Trinity, one God in three Persons, who accept this couple's welcome and bless them with the gift of new life.

In Rublev's symbolism, all three figures have the same face, since they are the same God. The eye is drawn by the way each figure looks at the others into a kind of movement – from Christ at the center, blessing the fruits of His Eucharistic sacrifice; to the Father, accepting this gift of the Son's love; and to the Spirit, whose gaze in turn directs us to the Eucharist and to the niche under the table, suggesting the martyrs "beneath the altar" who will share this sacrifice with their lives. The shape of the outer two figures creates a space between Father and Spirit in the shape of a chalice, with Jesus again in the center. The tree by Abraham's dwelling suggests the Tree of Life, the Cross, that seems to grow out of the Son; the House of the Church rests upon the shoulders of the Father; and the Spirit supports us even when the mountains that Rublev dimly sketches may stand in our path. Like the Apostles, we too may worship but

also doubt – not doubting that Jesus has risen, but doubting how He can help us in seemingly insurmountable problems – like those perhaps on our minds and hearts today. But *perhaps most important of all in this icon, there is a space left open at the front of Abraham’s table. This empty space in the middle draws the viewer in, invited to a place at the altar, brought into this communion of love that is the inner life of God.*

The First Letter of John tells us in three simple words of inexhaustible meaning that “God is love,” and that we are children of this God, *children always loved even if not always so lovable in our actions*. God IS love; John teaches. the very essence of God is selfless Gift that creates, bestows, overflows with goodness, an endless exchange that IS One Perfect Communion of divine Charity in Father, Son, and Spirit, a charity revealed most fully in our midst in the Cross of Jesus. So ... when we see love, authentic self-giving love, we see something of the God in whose image we are made. Every act of selfless love gives us a glimpse of what God looks like.

*That place at Rublev’s table remains open to draw us into the Eucharistic love of the risen Jesus. Communion with Him does not resolve all the problems we face, but it does assure us that God is with us even in those moments when the Cross is at the center of our experience, and only divine Love can make sense of things.*

What does God look like? This week, join me in choosing one act of kindness that we have been putting off or takes us out of ourselves. This is the best way we have to honor the Trinity not as a concept but as the God in whose image we are made. In a world that so often tells us “No one knows what God looks like,” we reply with every act of love like Christ’s: *“They will when we’re finished.”*