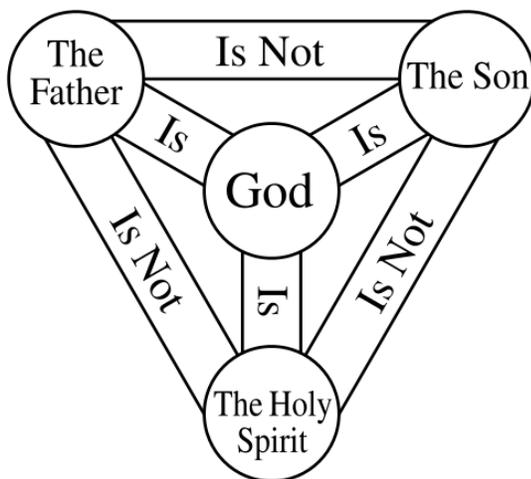


How Can I Describe the Holy Trinity to a Child?

One of the most fundamental beliefs of Christians everywhere is the belief in the Holy Trinity, the confession that God is one in substance and three in person. This is a belief that God has revealed to us, most explicitly through the incarnation of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

This is a mystery of our faith and no human being can truly understand it fully. Then there is the challenge of taking such a complex concept like the Trinity and making it easier for children to grasp. For most parents and educators the task is daunting. For example there are many popular explanations (such as the shamrock — or our modern version, the fidget spinner) that present the Trinity as “parts” of a whole and end up creating an image of the Trinity that is not entirely accurate. To be sure, God has no parts. In the end whatever explanation is used, it needs to be faithful to the essential belief in the Trinity while not creating misconceptions in the believer.

It is important to remember that ultimately our efforts will fall short. The *Catechism* explains how it is a mystery, one that requires more than just reason to believe in. The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the “mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God.” To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel’s faith before the Incarnation of God’s Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit. (CCC 237)



There is an ancient Trinitarian diagram, often called the “Shield of the Trinity,” that helps explain who God is and the relation of the three divine persons. The diagram helps show visually how each of the three persons is God, but remains distinct from the others. This image can be helpful for children who are beginning to grasp the reality of the Trinity.