

The Trinity & Relationships Workshop Notes



HOLDING SLIDE

This workshop focuses on the Trinity and the lessons it teaches us about relationships; personal and global.

The workshop lasts up to 40 minutes. We recommend you deliver all content but please use the slides and script as circumstances allow.

The extension tasks are optional and stand alone so you can choose which ones to use, or use all of them.



INTRODUCTION

This workshop has been prepared by **Missio**, the Catholic Church's official charity for overseas mission. Mission simply means being sent out to deliver God's love to others through our actions and words.

Later on we'll find out how Missio does this, but for now let's focus on the theme of this workshop, which is the Trinity and relationships.

SLIDE TWO

Let's start by looking at the word 'relationship'.

Relationship stems from the Latin word 'Lātus'

Noun - side or flank

Verb - 'to carry, to bear'.

Relationships then are to do with supporting, carrying others.

The best illustration of this is here. [Click on the slide's hyperlink to play film.](#)



Question – How many of you remember this happening? What can you tell us about it?

Answer - The event happened at the 2016 Triathlon World Series in Mexico. Alistair Brownlee gave up chance to win the championship by helping his brother Jonny over the line.

Many may think that Alistair helping his own brother was to be expected. This is what most people would do for their loved ones. But after the event Alistair said this...

[Click to reveal quotation](#)

'If it happened to anyone I would have helped them across the line because it's an awful position to be in. It was a natural human reaction to help my brother, but for anyone I would have done the same thing.'

Alistair's comment speaks of mercy, love, support and solidarity. These ingredients are necessary if we are to create good relationships with others, not just loved ones, but also people we don't know and will never meet.

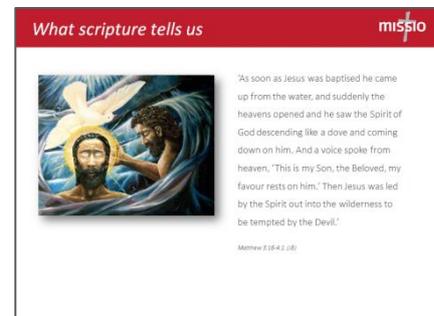
The Bible communicates a great deal about the need to establish good and supportive relationships with others, and how by learning from one relationship in particular we are helped to do this.

Let's look at one such Bible passage now.

SLIDE THREE

'As soon as Jesus was baptised he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And a voice spoke from heaven, "This is my Son, the Beloved, my favour rests on him." Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.' Matthew 3:16 - 4:1 (JB

Adapted)



Question – Does anyone recognise this passage or can tell us what is it describing?

Answer – This is an account of Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan.

Question – There are three characters mentioned in this passage. Who are they?

Answer – the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.

Question – What does the Church call this collection of three persons who together form one God?

Answer – The Trinity

Our understanding of the Trinity comes from the Bible.

This account of Jesus' Baptism, taken from the Gospel of Matthew, helps us to see the powerful nature of God – able to open the heavens – and how the three aspects of the Trinity **relate lovingly and work together as one**:

As the passage shows; Father sends the Spirit, Spirit guides the Son, Son follows the will of the Father.

Although scriptures like the one we've heard try to explain the Trinity to us, it remains a **mystery** that is difficult to understand.

SLIDE FOUR

Over the years many have tried to find ways to communicate the Trinity's truth. St Patrick's example - developed 1,600 years ago - is one of the most famous.

Question – Can anyone tell us what this is?

Answer – A shamrock leaf.

Question – Can anyone explain how St Patrick used the shamrock to explain the Trinity?

Answer – The shamrock leaf has three distinct sections. In St Patrick's example each section represents one person of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Just as the three sections form one living unit, Father, Son and Holy Spirit **are three aspects of one God**. But, as with the leaves of the shamrock, **life and love flows because of, and through, their connectedness**.

[Click to reveal abridged answer on screen.](#)

The Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are connected to one another and so make up one God, life flows through their relationship.



EXTENSION TASK – Explaining the Trinity

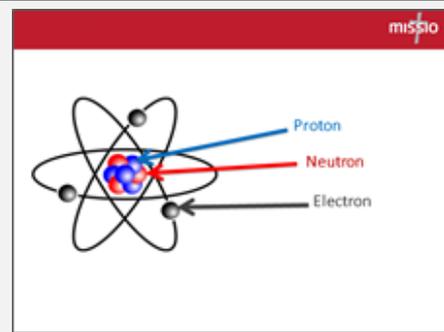
Provide groups of three with a sheet of paper and ask students to write / draw, symbols / ideas that could help explain the Trinity to others. Ideas might be an egg - yoke, shell, and white or else water - liquid, steam or ice.

Once responses have been shared with the class, ask students if working in groups of three - as opposed to working alone - was helpful. If so, ask how? Write down the students' responses as you may want to refer back to them later.

SLIDE FIVE – Extension Information

This slide contains information that reinforces ideas promoted above. Slide can be skipped to save time.

This ancient Christian idea of three aspects forming one being and creating life through their relationship has been reflected in science too.



Question – Hands up if you recognise this image? Can anyone tell us what it is?

Answer – An Atom.

Atoms are the basic building block of our entire physical universe.

Question – Can anyone tell us what three components Atoms are made up of?

Click to reveal: Proton, Neutron, Electron.

These three components can do little by themselves, **it is only when they orbit each other, when they are in relationship, that they form and power the atom.** Then the atoms join with other atoms to form molecules which make up the objects in the world around us.

The Atom and the Trinity provide a wonderful example of the relationship that exists between science and religion. A relationship that increases our understanding of life and truth.

SLIDE SIX

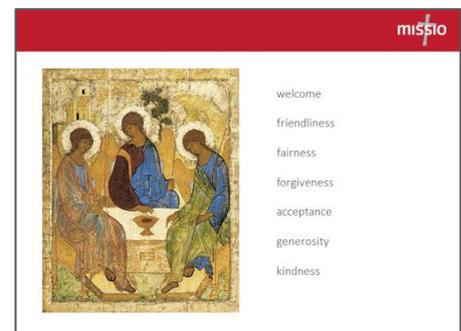
For hundreds of years, the Trinity has demonstrated how all life is founded on positive relationships. The giving and receiving that make up the inner life of God is a model for our own relationships with each other and with creation.

Positive relationships like this are marked by certain values and behaviour.

Question – What do you think these might be? What values and behaviours do we need to practise to build positive relationships?

If your students undertook the Extension Task 'Explaining the Trinity', ask them to think about the values and behaviours they needed to work together well.

Click to reveal responses: friendliness, fairness, forgiveness, respect, acceptance, generosity, kindness.



The values and behaviours you listed, and those on the screen, are vital in the relationships we share with those close to us. But the Trinity teaches us that we should practise the same with all people we meet, whatever their background or belief.

Through the Trinity, Christians are taught that Father, Son and Spirit relate to one another **as equals**, even though each person of the one God **is different**.

This famous devotional painting – or icon – of the Trinity captures this.

EXTENSION TASK – A closer look at the painting

The Trinity is an icon created by Russian painter Andrei Rublev in the 15th century. An icon is a devotional painting; this means they are used to aid prayer. Icon artists can spend months reflecting and praying over one painting so as to communicate as best as they can God's truth.

This icon depicts a famous story from the Old Testament (Genesis 18: 1-2), in which the prophet Abraham is visited by three angelic visitors, illustrated in the painting. Some Christians believe Abraham's visitors represented the three persons of the Trinity.

Question – Working in groups of three, identify ways in which the painter symbolises the different but equal status of the Trinity. How are they the same and how are they different?

Answer – The figures are painted in different colours, but wear the same clothes and are equal in size. The figures sit apart but face one another and they share the same cup. They also all have a staff symbolising their equal authority.

The painter symbolises the different but equal status of each person of the Trinity by painting them all in different colours but wearing the same clothes. In addition the figures sit apart but face one another, they also share the same table and cup. They also all have a staff symbolising their equal authority.

You can also see at the front of the painting there is an empty space. Originally the painting had a mirror attached to this spot, so that the viewer – us – would look and see ourselves at the table too.

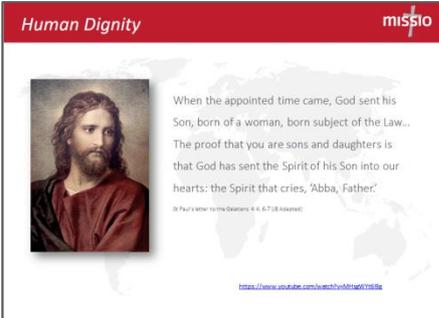
The mirror would have reminded us that we too are invited to sit at God's table where we are energised, nourished and cared for.

This image of being fed at God's table helps us understand **God the Father**, the creator of all, who provides for and protects his creation and his children.

This is the person of the Trinity that we hear of in the Lord's Prayer - often known as the *Our Father* - and taught to us by another person of the Trinity, **God the Son**.

SLIDE SEVEN

In the incarnation of his son, Jesus, which means *God became flesh*, God shows us how great his love is for us.



Human Dignity missio

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born subject of the Law... The proof that you are sons and daughters is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, 'Abba, Father.'

St Paul's letter to the Galatians 4: 4, 6-7 (B Revised)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m7686>

By becoming man, Jesus understands our humanity - our anxieties and our suffering.

He shows us how we are made in God's image and that God wants us to have a personal relationship with him – a relationship of love.

As the scripture on screen from St Paul explains, the incarnation of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, also helps us see that human beings - whatever their background, race, belief or ability - are **children of God the Father**, this gives us all dignity beyond measure.

'When the appointed time came, God sent his Son... The proof that you are sons and daughters is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, "Abba, Father." *St Paul's letter to the Galatians 4:4, 6-7 (JB Adapted)*

This belief in human dignity should influence how we view and treat ourselves and other people. All our relationships should express respect, support and love - in every circumstance.

EXTENSION RESOURCE – YouTube Clip of 'Carlinhos - a deaf and blind Brazilian football fan

The following clip illustrates this well.

[Click on link in slide to show film \(58 seconds\).](#)

Question – Hands up if you've seen this clip? Online it's had millions of views across the world. What does it teach us about positive relationships and human dignity?

SLIDE EIGHT

The words and actions of Jesus, recorded in the Gospels, emphasise God's desire, that like the Trinity, we must relate to each other with love.

This is not always easy, but God sends the third person of the Trinity, **the Holy Spirit**, to help us.

This is illustrated in the scripture on screen. In this passage from Acts of the Apostles, Jesus reassures his disciples that after he returns to heaven, he will send the Holy Spirit to empower and guide them.

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit descends upon you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.' *Acts 1:8 (JB Adapted)*

The Holy Spirit is the loving energy created through the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. This energy flows through the Holy Spirit into creation and into humanity, making known God's presence in the world today.



Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians across the world are able to continue the work Jesus and his first disciples began - whereby everyone learns that they are loved by God and work with others so that all people are treated with dignity and have opportunities to live well.

Question - Who is responsible for doing that here, today?

Answer - We are. We are all called to be **missionary** – that is people **sent** by God to make his love known wherever we are.

SLIDE NINE

But some individuals travel overseas to do this, providing practical and spiritual support in areas of poverty and conflict.

Missio is the Pope's official charity for overseas mission and this on screen is Missio's collection box.

Through prayer and donations, Missio's supporters help missionary priests, nuns and lay people who are committed to sharing God's love by providing spiritual and practical care to all in need, regardless of background or belief.



Read out the examples below, or skip the list and use the extension resource.

On screen are some missionaries and projects, supported by Missio (clockwise from top left):

- **Sr Ruby** – provides medical and food supplies to those living in poverty on tea plantations in the remote highlands of Sri Lanka.
- **Fr Henry** – provides young men living in poverty with safe accommodation, daily meals, and access to education. For more information see Missio Film 'Pirimiti Boys'.
- **Sr Sonia** – helped set up and run a health clinic and feeding program in rural Malawi.
- **Fr Frans** – lives and works in India's slums. With the help of Missio, Fr Frans set up a health centre, community garden and school, to support those living in poverty.
- **Sr Eulie** - set up and manages the Lindalva Centre for children living in poverty in Cambodia.

EXTENSION RESOURCE – Film: Pirimiti Boys.

By establishing and running the Pirimiti Boarding House, Fr Henry (on screen, top middle), provides young men living in poverty in Malawi with safe accommodation, daily meals, and access to education. See how Missio supporters assist Fr Henry in his mission to uphold the dignity of the Pirimiti Boys by watching the following film.

Pirimiti Boys (2.20mins) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xARilOZO1s>

SLIDE TEN

Missionaries need to develop positive relationships with all people if they are to build God's kingdom on earth.

God's kingdom isn't a physical place, but the world we create when we live as Christ taught.

We catch glimpses of the kingdom when we are in environments where people treat one another with respect. When people are kind, forgiving, selfless, seek justice and build peace.

All the Youtube clips in this workshop provide evidence of God's Spirit at work and reveal glimpses of God's kingdom.

Let's conclude this workshop by thinking of ways we can, as missionaries of God's love, build positive relationships with others.

- Treat **all** people with the dignity they deserve, remembering that as children of God they are our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Do our best to follow the example of Jesus, God made man, through reading and reflecting on the Gospels.
- Help overseas missionaries by praying for their work with the poor and marginalised and supporting Missio.

Let's do that now by saying the following prayer together.

Click twice to reveal prayer

Lord God, through the Trinity you teach us that life and love flow through your relationship.

Inspired by this, may we honour God the Father, by caring for creation and providing for others.

May we follow God the Son, showing mercy, acting justly, walking humbly with all.

May we be led by God the Spirit, acting with courage, wisdom and joy.

In this way may we be missionaries of your love,

To all, everywhere, forever. Amen.

