

How did the constellations form?

By what sense of order does the earth orbit the sun?

How is it that birds know when to migrate and frogs know when to lay eggs?

By what wisdom are human beings different from other animals?

How did we get here?

These and many other questions have been pondered by humanity since our creation.

Many answers have been given, depending on who is asking the questions.

Scientists will answer in terms of laws of physics and natural processes.

Philosophers will answer in terms of lofty ideas and logic.

Poets and artists will use words and feelings, colors and music to respond to these deepest questions.

Religious people of all kinds will answer in terms of deities with superhuman power.

Christians answer with God, who has been revealed as the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son, and their Holy Spirit,

also known and confessed as the Holy Trinity.

Human understanding is not sufficient to comprehend this mystery of God.

Words and images such as the apple or shamrock, while of some use, are ultimately inadequate.

Rather than try to be theological contortionists, we should follow the lead of the Lord Jesus Himself, who gives us 3 ways to relate to the Trinity:

1. Receive – when Jesus was baptized, he received the Holy Spirit with the Word of the Father
 - a. We receive the power of the Holy Spirit in Baptism
 - b. We receive the love of the Father through the Son’s mercy and forgiveness
 - c. We receive the grace of the Triune God through the Holy Scriptures as we hear them, read them, study them, and pray them
 - d. We receive with open hands, open hearts
 - i. We empty ourselves to be filled with God
2. Praise – receiving the amazing power and presence of the triune God, we cannot help but praise God.
 - a. O Lord, our Lord, how exalted is your name in all the world!
 - b. With the Psalmist, we praise God with exclamation points!
 - c. Whether out loud – Christ is risen! Alleluia!
 - d. Or whether in silence as we read or think or pray in our hearts: Thank you Jesus!
 - e. The big churchy word for the praise we give especially to the Holy Trinity is “doxology”.
 - i. We hear it from the angels at the birth of Jesus: Glory to God in the highest!
 - ii. We hear it in the Psalms: *Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.*
⁹ *Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.*
¹⁰ *Glory in his holy name;*

let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

*¹¹Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.*

- iii. We hear it in the church's liturgy: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...
- iv. We hear it in the church's hymns:
 - 1. Sing with me – Praise God from whom all blessings flow...
 - 2. Such doxology is often the last stanza of the church's most timeless hymns

We RECEIVE the Holy Trinity, and we PRAISE the Holy Trinity.
Third,

- 3. LIVE the Holy Trinity– we take action in our lives to glorify God. Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit
 - a. We pray to the Father with Jesus in the Holy Spirit, as Jesus taught us.
 - b. We make the sign of the cross, in the Name of the F, S, HS
 - c. We live with confidence in the presence of God, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus in us.
 - d. Such confidence gives us peace, even when our world is in turmoil.
 - e. Even planting a garden can be an expression of hopeful, joyful faith in the Triune God.
 - f. As Christians, we are not stuck in a reactionary mode, as though there is something worse than being eternally separated from God.
 - i. Instead, we can endure earthly suffering for our faith in hope, because God has poured divine love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

- ii. In other words, even the worst someone else can do to us is nothing compared to the life God has promised in Jesus Christ.
- iii. Or as Pastor Jeff Compton put it in his sermon to the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly, “Christians know that they are more alive after they die than before.”
- g. But our confidence in God is not simply a matter of passive endurance, waiting for pie in the sky – it also gives us cause for boldness, so that we act to bring God’s love, God’s peace, and God’s life to bear in our world.

We receive, we Praise, and we live the Holy Trinity.

We confess our faith in this God, who is relational, communal, a dynamic force of love who creates, redeems, and sanctifies us.

...

I remember swimming in the ocean at various times in my life.

In calm weather, I floated, relaxing and enjoying the rise and fall of the current, the waves gently lifting me up and setting me down.

In breezy weather, I enjoyed anticipating the power of the waves to carry my body forcefully into shore.

And sometimes, the waves were so big, that I enjoyed ducking under them and feeling the powerful surge wash over me with crashing and crushing loudness and weight.

The experience of the triune God can be like all of those things – gentle, forceful, and mighty.

And with God, we are assured that even were the ocean to drown us, the Holy Spirit is restored to us and our lives are resurrected in glory, as it was with Jesus.

O Lord, our Lord – how exalted is your name in all the world!

The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen