

Andrei Rublëv, Monk and Iconographer (1360-1430)
Observed 29 January



Andrei Rublev is probably the world's most famous writer of icons. His icons have had a profound influence on the theology and devotion of people not only in the Russian Church, but throughout the world. Their exceptional beauty truly does seem to provide the window into heaven which is the purpose of icons. His Holy Trinity Icon, one of his most famous, has been the basis of sermons and treatises, meditations and books about the human apprehension of the complex reality of God.

That the humble monk Andrei should be world-famous is of course inconsistent with the humility of both his monastic vocation and the purpose of icon writing. Both monks and icons are intended to serve God and the people of God without calling attention to themselves. However, Brother Andrei's talent was so extraordinary that people have talked about him and his work in his time and down into our own. His style brought together disparate elements to establish what quickly came to be considered the ideal style of representation in icons and frescoes in Orthodox churches – a style which combines the precise vocabulary of the Orthodox tradition (making each scene and individual easily

identifiable) with a serene beauty which transports the prayerful viewer into communion with the divine.

In contrast to the customary stability of monks who are generally expected to remain in a single community, Brother Andrei was in demand all around Russia. He was involved in painting the frescoes of Annunciation Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin (his first major work, where he was assisting the famous Greek iconographer Theophanes and Prokhor of Gorodets), Assumption Cathedral in Gorodets, Holy Trinity Cathedral at Trinity-Saint Sergei monastery, and Savior Cathedral at the Andronikov Monastery in Moscow. So he moved from community to community when his work was needed – and worked cooperatively with others all over. In addition to the large scale church frescoes, he wrote many icons and was involved in the illumination of manuscripts, but his famous Trinity Icon is one of the few works known to be entirely his own. Brother Andrei's gift was a gift of the Holy Spirit for the common good, not for his own fame or glory. It is a quirk of history that he was instrumental in the flowering of this important art form such that he received personal fame. We know little of his individual life, but give abundant thanks to God for the extraordinary gifts he shared with the church and the world.

Lessons Genesis 28:10-17; Psalm 62:6-9; 2; Corinthians 2:14-17; Matthew 6:19-23

Collect Holy God, we bless you for the gift of your monk and icon writer Andrei Rublev, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provided a window into heaven for generations to come, revealing the majesty and mystery of the holy and blessed Trinity; who lives and reigns through ages of ages. Amen.