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### Origin of Triquetra? **Father Reginald Martin** The Catholic Answer

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**Q.** What is the origin of the symbol *triquetra*?

— **Betsy Schmuck**

**A.** Here's a reply from Father Reginald Martin:

*Triquetra* is a Latin word, meaning "triangular" or "three-cornered." In its simplest form, the *triquetra* is three interconnected ovals — one pointing upward, the other two pointing down, to the left and right. Contemporary Americans may have encountered their first *triquetra* on the television series "Charmed," but the symbol is much older.

Carvings resembling *triquetras* have been identified in Indian sites said to be 5,000 years old. In Western culture, the symbol seems to have appeared around the seventh or eighth centuries in Norse Viking and Celtic cultures. It appears in the ninth century in the Book of Kells as a decorative element, with no particular religious significance, and the symbol has been found in Norwegian churches dating to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Scholars and historians have not determined either the history of the *triquetra* or one interpretation of its meaning. However, because it is composed of three interconnected parts, different religious cultures ascribe various three-fold meanings to it. Among Christian Celts, the *triquetra* has come to be identified with the Trinity, especially since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary pagans identify its ovals as symbols of death and reincarnation; earth, air and water; mother (creation), maiden (innocence) and old woman (wisdom).

**Tags:** Church History, Religious Symbols

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