

The Trinity – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

I. Definitions:

- A. The Trinity is a **dogma** (a decree) of the Roman Catholic Church. The dogma of the Trinity states that there is ONE God (ONE BEING) with three divine persons.
- B. **Person:** intelligent substance (the essence of a thing); **3** persons but **1** substance. This is a MYSTERY to our minds; but we will try to explain it. Refer to Mario Derksen's analogy of the Trinity.
- C. A **dogma** is a solemnly defined, official Roman Catholic Church teaching which is **infallible**.
- D. **Infallible** = incapable of being in error; **1 Tim. 3:15**; The Roman Catholic Church claims that the Pope can only declare infallibility in cases of *faith* or *morals*.
- E. **Ex cathedra** (from the “chair” [authority] of Peter) refer to the Gospel of **Matthew** chapter **16** verses **13 – 20**.
- F. Some of the Dogmatic truths were revealed by Jesus to the Apostles, others developed through Church Tradition.
- G. The **FIVE** dogmas of the Church are: **the Trinity, the Incarnation, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Immaculate Conception** (Mary being conceived without Original Sin), **and the Assumption of Mary into Heaven**. Faith (assent of the intellect and will) in these dogmas is a supernatural gift from God to you.
- H. Belief in dogmas leads to everlasting life; denial of a dogma is *heresy* (to act against established Church beliefs).

II. The Dogma of the Trinity:

- A. The dogma of the Trinity maintains that God is one divine nature yet three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man was made in God's image. This developed out of the early Church Council's decisions to formulate our beliefs: **Jesus is 100% God and 100% man.**
- B. God loves, cares, shares His life, is faithful and true to us. The Church understands that the three persons of the Trinity are eternal and equal, yet, distinct, and **they deserve equal honor and respect from us.** **2nd Corinthians 13:13** – a letter of Paul to the Church at Corinth concludes: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Jesus, as God - the 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity - taught and adhered to the basic understanding of the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (examples of this can be found in the four Gospels).
Refer to Matthew 28: 18 – 20.

III. God – Almighty (Father) :

- A. Of all the divine characteristics, only God's **omnipotence** is named in the Creed: *to confess this power* of God's omnipotence has great bearing on our lives.
- B. **Psalm 115: 3** says: "He does whatever He pleases."
- C. **Genesis 18: 14; Genesis 49: 24; Isaiah 1: 24; Psalm 24: 8-10; Luke 1: 37; Matt 19: 26;** "If God is almighty in heaven and on earth" it is because He *made* them. Confer page 71-72 of the *Catholic Catechism*. "God is the first and the last, the beginning and the end of everything."
- D. **Exodus 3: 13-15:** "*I AM WHO I AM.*" – YHWH - ("*I AM HE WHO IS.*") God says who He is and by what name He is to be called. The divine name is mysterious just as God is a mystery.
- E. "*Hear O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!*" You shall love the Lord with your entire being and your neighbor as yourself. (**Deuteronomy 6: 4; Mark 12: 29**).

God the Son – Jesus Christ

- A. God the Father reveals His plan of salvation through the Bible. God desires to save His people (**Exodus 14: 30**). In the *Gospel of John 3: 16-17*: God's love, mercy, salvation, desire to redeem men.
- B. The doctrine of original sin is the “reverse side” of the *Good News* that Jesus is the Savior of all mankind. All men and women need salvation. Original sin came into the world through the first (original) sin of our spiritual parents: Adam and Eve - in that sin **man preferred himself to God** and by that act spurned and scorned God. Man tried to be God *without* God (**Genesis 3**). God permits evil as a result of free will and intellectual choice **and in some cases** in order to bring forth some greater good.
- C. Behind the disobedient choice of Adam and Eve, lurks the seductive voice of Satan. This voice is opposed to God, and tempts Adam and Eve to fall into sin, misery, sickness, and death out of spite and envy (cf. **Genesis 3: 1-5; Wisdom 2: 24; John 8: 44; Revelation 12: 9**). In 1215, the Lateran Council stated that Satan and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil **of their own choice**. Spiritual warfare (which we are right in the middle of) is constantly going on and has since the fall of mankind. I highly recommend C.S. Lewis' book *The Screwtape Letters*.
- D. **2 Peter 2: 4** speaks of the sin of the angels. Their “fall” consists in the free choice of these created angels to reject God and His reign. We discover a reflection of that rebellion in Satan’s words (**Genesis 3: 5**) to our first parents: “You will be like God.” The devil (Satan) “has sinned from the beginning,” he is “a liar and the father of lies” (**1 John 3: 8; John 8: 44**). Satan and the demons choices are **irrevocable**. Their sin is unforgivable. St. John Damascene said “There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men **after** death.”

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- E. You have to make your choice for God – NOW. Scripture tells us of the horrible influence of the one Jesus calls “a murderer from the beginning.” Satan, in his arrogance and pride, would even try to divert Jesus from the mission He received from His Father (***John 8: 44; Matthew 4: 1-11***).
- F. In the *Epistle of John (1 John 3: 8)*: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of Satan;” *to bring salvation to a spiritually disordered world.*
- G. In the Advent Season we sing “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.*” (*Emmanuel* = “God Saves”). Jesus is “the Eternal Word” of God. Jesus is the final revelation of the Father to the world. Jesus **is** the Redeemer/Reconciler.
- H. **THE DOGMA OF THE INCARNATION:** ***John 3: 16-17*** - God the Father provides salvation to the world through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus. **Jesus’ mission** was to preach, teach, heal, suffer and die for all mankind – past, present, future.
- I. The Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit, raised Him up in the moment of the Resurrection on the third day (what Christians call Easter Sunday morning). **The Eternal Word of God became flesh in order to sacrifice/reconcile us with the Father.** Jesus **represents all of us. He accepted the burden of all of humanity’s sins.**
- J. “This is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;” “God has visited His people; He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He has sent his own “beloved Son.” (***Mark 1: 11; Luke 1: 55, 68; Matthew 3: 17; Matthew 17: 5***), *to take away our sins (1 John 4: 10; 4: 14; 3: 5)*. St. Leo the Great said in a sermon on this subject that Christ’s graces of the Incarnation, death, and resurrection gave us blessings better than those Satan had stolen. (CCC: page 104)
- K. Church Councils have stated that Jesus is 100% divine and 100% human.

God the Holy Spirit

(Confer Rev. Andrew Apostoli's book: *The Advocate – The Spirit of Truth*)

- A. The Holy Spirit has an equal place with the Father and the Son. ***The FAMILY of God*** is called the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- B. The Holy Spirit is ***the life, the love, the force***, which binds the family of God together. The Holy Spirit is a distinct Person of God (remember, one substance, three persons).
- C. We are part of God's family ***when we are living in*** the Holy Spirit – this means living in a state of grace (no mortal sin on your soul) and in communion with God and His Church. When we do not live in the Spirit, we cannot be living the life that the Trinity intended for us. ***Luke 3: 21-22; Luke 4: 1; Luke 4: 17-18; Luke 4: 32; Luke 4: 36; Luke 5: 17;*** and the entire book in the *New Testament* called the ***Acts of the Apostles*** which appears immediately after the Gospel of John.
- D. Some important references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament: ***Gospel of John 1: 29-34; Gospel of John 3: 1- 21; Gospel of John 14: 15 ff.; John 16: 4 ff.; Acts of the Apostles: 2 – 28; 1 Corinthians 2:7 – 16; Romans 5: 5; Galatians 5: 5 - 26; Ephesians 6: 10 – 17.***
- E. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus – Being Born Again!
Confer ***Gospel of John*** chapter 3. ... Jesus answered him, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" Nicodemus said to him, "*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" Jesus answered, "***Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.***"
- F. The Son so loves the Father that He does nothing of Himself but does only what He hears from the Father, and acts only for the glory of the Father and not for His own glory. Confer (St. Paul's Epistle (letter) to the ***Philippians***, chapter 2).
- G. This mutual total gift binds the Father and Son together in that love, that force, that power which we call The Holy Spirit. Both Father and Son are so totally expressed in this love that THE LOVE ITSELF IS A PERSON.

- H. **To enter into the family of God it is necessary** to develop a new relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is done through the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation; but, it is also aided and substantially supported by the reception of the other four Sacraments: Reconciliation (it also called Penance or Confession), Marriage, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick. Prayer and the reading of God's word in Holy Scripture is absolutely essential to developing a new relationship with The Holy Trinity.
- I. The Holy Spirit gives us "**seven gifts**," as prophesied in the book of **Isaiah in the Hebrew Scriptures**, within beautiful chapter 11 "**The Rule of Emmanuel**." Some of these gifts are *counsel*- to be able to do God's will in all things; *fortitude* – courage in our commitment to God; *piety* – child-like love for God; etc.). Also, the Holy Spirit gives His specific fruits (personal behavior and relationship qualities that come from the Seven Gifts: examples are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

J. You can read about the **Seven "Gifts of the Spirit"**:

In the *Old Testament*: **Isaiah 11: 2-3**; and
in the *New Testament*: St. Paul's *Epistle to the 1 Corinthians 12: 4ff*;

You can read about the **"Fruits of the Spirit"**

in St. Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians 5: 22ff*.

The *Gifts perfect us* and are to be **used** for the good of the Church (remember Matthew's Gospel concerning the parable of the talents given to the servants by the demanding master, and the recounting of the Last Judgment and the separation of the sheep from the goats).

