

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Today, we celebrate the foundational dogma/belief of our Catholic Christian faith, our belief in a Triune God. The big problem we face when speaking about the Trinity is that it is totally beyond our experience. Hot and cold are concepts. We only know what they mean through our experience of hot and cold. But, none of us have available to our experience a Triune God.

Yet because we are intelligent beings and because we have been blessed with the gift of supernatural faith, we humans have always sought to comprehend in some small way the awesome mystery of the Blessed Trinity. But, we must always remember that our best efforts to attempt to comprehend a Triune God, are like a drop in a mighty ocean.

The word *Trinity* does not appear in the Bible. Trinity is a term created by one of the early church theologians. The word *Trinity* is a composite of two Latin words: *Tri* = three and *unius* = one. So Trinity speaks of a reality where there is three in one.

Theologians point out that the Trinity is hinted at in the opening lines of the Bible. God, our Creator is explicitly mentioned as the One creating the world. Verse two of the opening chapter of Genesis speaks of a “mighty wind” sweeping over waters. Many see the “mighty wind” as a reference to the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, he came as a “mighty wind”. God *speaking* (words of creation) is seen as a reference to Jesus. In the prologue of his Gospel, John refers to Jesus as the Word of God.

*In the beginning was the Word;
the Word was in God's presence,
and the Word was God.
....Through him all things came into being.
(John 1:1-2)*

Then in the “fullness of time” (God’s time), the “Word became flesh and dwelt in our midst:” So the Word of God took on human form and was named Jesus. When the Word became flesh and walked among us he spoke of himself as having a very intimate relationship with God and that he and God were One. That kind of talk had to blow the minds of the Apostles because they knew for certain that there was only *one* God. They had no inkling of a Triune God. The reality of the Trinity only started to dawn on them after the Holy Spirit descended upon them and enlightened them about the true nature of God. In John 14:26, Jesus says “*The Advocate whom I will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.*” So gradually, the Holy Spirit opened the minds and hearts of the Christian community to the true nature of God. Coming to believe in a Triune God was a very gradual process. Paul’s piece on God’s Plan in Ephesians 1:3-4 is regarded as one of the first attempts to articulate the Christian belief in a Triune God.

After the death of the Apostles as great intellects and thinkers were converted to Christianity they started to discuss and debate the nature of God. They also started to try to formulate and express in human terms the inexpressible nature of God. As one might expect some false notions about God also started to fly out around. Some people denied the divinity of Christ and others denied his humanity. Gradually attempts were made at great church councils to articulate the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. The doctrine started to be articulated in the following way:

*There is only one God,
But in God there are three divine,
completely equal persons.
Each Person is distinct from the other Two.
Each is fully God and equal to each other.
One did not come before the other.
The Second Person of the Trinity has two
natures—a divine and human nature.*

Also, gradually, the Son was seen as the expression of the Father and the Holy Spirit was seen as the love that existed between the Father and the Son.

Even though this Triune God is everywhere, he has come to live in us through baptism. We are temples of the Father, Son and Spirit. (Jn 14:23) Hence, our awesome dignity and the awesome dignity of every person we meet—even the person we most intensely dislike.

Theologians also like to point out that the Holy Trinity is a *Community of Persons* who totally love each other. God's great plan is to draw us into this divine circle of love. Our eternal destiny is to live forever with God the Father, Son and Spirit.

Explaining the Trinity to Children

First of all, the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be explained. But, just as the Bible gives us images of God and just theologians and pastors use analogies like the triangle and the shamrock to explain something of the great mystery of God, we too can try to use simple images, analogies or examples to speak to children about God. One I often use is to speak to children about their dad or mom as three persons wrapped up as one. Their dad, is their mother's 'honey' or 'darling'. He is their 'dad' or 'pop' and at work he is the mailman, doctor, truck driver etc. Of course, when it comes to God every analogy limps and many have no legs. In the above example the dad is one person, whereas in the Trinity we have three distinct persons.

Prayer to the Blessed Trinity

*O my God, Trinity whom I adore,
Help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you,
unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were
already in eternity.
May nothing be able to trouble my peace
Or make me leave you, O my unchanging God,
but may each minute bring me more deeply
into your mystery.
Grant my soul peace.
Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling
and the place of your rest.
May I never abandon you there,
but may I be there, whole and entire,
completely vigilant in my faith,
Entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your
creative action.*