The Trinity in the Creed

“…One God, The Father…”

CCC 232 – 255 – (260)

# The Trinity

CCC 232-237

"The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity." (CCC 232)

“The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and life… It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the ‘hierarchy of the truths of faith.’” (234)

Breaking that down: “The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity

* is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. – **Why?** **Is this surprising?**
* It is the mystery of God in himself.
* It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. – **What are some other mysteries of the faith? Make a list. How is the trinity the source and the light?**
* It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith".” (CCC 234)

Outline of Part One, Section Two, Chapter 1, Article 1, Paragraph 2. The Father (232-260)

1. How the Blessed Trinity was revealed
2. How the Church has articulated the doctrine of the faith regarding this mystery
3. How, by the divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, God the Father fulfills the “plan of his loving goodness” of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

**How do you experience the Trinity?** (In your prayer life, in the sacraments, in your daily life, in your theology… open ended question to see where everyone is at).

**Do you experience the persons of God individually or as one being? Which person of the trinity to do you relate most and least to?**

When making mankind in His image, He did not create a series of independent beings. Male and Female he created them, for God is love, and God is in communion with God. (I think this is a paraphrase from *Men and Women are from Eden*. *c.f.* CCC 221, 371-372)

**How do human relationships emulate the communion of the Trinity? Where do they fall short?**

236: The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology and economy:

* Theology - the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity
* Economy - all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life

The theology is revealed to us through the economy, but the theology illuminates the whole economy. That is to say: God’s works reveal who he is, but who he is illuminates all of his works.

“God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions.” (CCC 236)

**What kinds of works does God do in your life? What do those works reveal about God?**

**Conversely, how does what you know about God illuminate the works he does in your life or in the world?**

**What kinds of actions are you most known for? What are some actions you do most often? What does this reveal about who you are? And how does who you are illuminate your works?**

237: “The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the "mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God".58 To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of God's Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.”

## The Father Revealed by the Son

CCC 239 - 242

[**239**](javascript:openWindow('cr/239.htm');) By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood,62 which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard:63 no one is father as God is Father.

* first origin of everything
* transcendent authority
* goodness and loving care for all his children
* draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man.
* God transcends the human distinction between the sexes.
  + **How does our perception of a masculine God affect our relationship with him?**
* transcends human fatherhood and motherhood
* origin and standard [of motherhood and fatherhood]
  + **What did our Mothers teach us about God, personally, that is still evident in our relationship with God today?**
  + **What did our Fathers teach us about God, personally, that is still evident in our relationship with God today?**
  + **How can we show God to our children?**
  + **or how can we show God to people that look up to us (“spiritual children”)**

[**240**](javascript:openWindow('cr/240.htm');) Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

* no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
  + **How does Jesus reveal the Father to us?**
  + CCC 241: the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; as "the image of the invisible God"; as the "radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature"

242: ‘Following this apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is "consubstantial" with the Father, that is, one only God with him.’

**Thoughts are questions on the word “consubstantial?” Which did you like better, “consubstantial” or “one in being?”**

## The Father and the Son Revealed by the Holy Spirit

CCC 243 – 248

* “Jesus announced the sending of "another Paraclete" (Advocate), the Holy Spirit” (243)
* The Holy Spirit has been at work since creation (243)
* 244: “The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. The Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father.69 The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus' glorification70 reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.”
* “The apostolic faith concerning the Spirit was confessed by the second ecumenical council at Constantinople (381)” (CCC 245)

## The Holy Trinity in the Teaching of the Faith

CCC 249 – 256

Terminology for the Trinity (251-252)

* substance – the divine being in its unity
* person – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the real distinction among them
* relation – their distinction lies in the relationship of each to the others

Substance: the Trinity is One. “The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire” (CCC 253)

Substance versus personage:

* Substance: “The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is” (253)
* Persons: but they are still distinct. “He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son.” (254)
* ‘They are distinct from one another in their relations of origin:
  + "It is the Father who generates,
  + the Son who is begotten, and
  + the Holy Spirit who proceeds.”’ (254)

I used to think of the human body as an analogy for the trinity: I have hands and feet, and they are part of me, but they are distinct from one another. This analogy does not seem to work: it seems backwards. I think of my hand and foot as being different substances but of the same person. My hand is me, but it is not my foot. My foot is me, but it is not my hand. Of course, my hand is not the totality of me, but rather a part of me. It is not so with the trinity. The Trinity is the opposite. With the Trinity, we are not talking about *parts* of the *same person*, but *different persons* and each of them *whole*. “… each of them is God whole and entire.” (CCC 253) God is a “consubstantial Trinity.” (253)

**How would you explain the Trinity? What metaphors work for you? Where do they fall short? How do you think about the Trinity or attempt to conceive the idea of it?**

255: *The divine persons are relative to one another*. Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: "In the relational names of the persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance."89 Indeed "everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship."90 "Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son."

## Closing Quotes

“Each person considered in himself is entirely God. . . the three considered together. . . I have not even begun to think of unity when the Trinity bathes me in its splendor. I have not even begun to think of the Trinity when unity grasps me. . .” (256)

‘… the Church confesses, following the New Testament, "one God and Father from whom all things are, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and one Holy Spirit in whom all things are".’ (258)

“Hence the whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons, without in any way separating them. Everyone who glorifies the Father does so through the Son in the Holy Spirit; everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him.” (259)

**John 17: 20-23**

20“I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. 22And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

# Appendix

The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the “mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God.”… [It is] “inaccessible to reason alone.” (from CCC 237)

[**221**](javascript:openWindow('cr/221.htm');) But St. John goes even further when he affirms that "God is love":44 God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret:45 God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.

[**237**](javascript:openWindow('cr/237.htm');) The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the "mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God".58 To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of God's Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.