

The Second Two Sessions of “Why Catholic?” centered on “We Believe” and “The Trinity” Our Desire for God and God’s Revelation: Tradition and Scripture. For those who did not get a chance to attend, the following represents a summary of those two teachings. In the weeks to come we will be discussing ways you can get involved in the next group of Why Catholic? Sessions.

WE BELIEVE

We begin our profession of faith by saying: "I believe" or "We believe". Before expounding the Church's faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy and lived in observance of God's commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what "to believe" means. Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life.

Faith is a personal act - the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

"I believe" (*Apostles' Creed*) is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during Baptism. "We believe" (*Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*) is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. "I believe" is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both "I believe" and "We believe".

Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words. "To believe" has thus a twofold reference: to the person, and to the truth: to the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it.

We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. "Believing" is a human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of the human person.

"Believing" is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. "No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother" (St. Cyprian, *De unit.* 6: PL 4, 519). We believe all "that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church proposes for belief as divinely revealed" (Paul VI, CPG § 20).

Faith is necessary for salvation. The Lord himself affirms: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (*Mk* 16:16). "Faith is a foretaste of the knowledge that will make us blessed in the life to come" (St. Thomas Aquinas. *Comp. theol.* 1, 2).

THE TRINITY

"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD. . ." (*Dt* 6:4; *Mk* 12:29). "The supreme being must be unique, without equal. . . If God is not one, he is not God" (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, 1, 3, 5: PL 2, 274).

Faith in God leads us to turn to him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal, and neither to prefer anything to him nor to substitute anything for him. Even when he reveals himself, God remains a mystery beyond words: "If you understood him, it would not be God" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 52, 6, 16: PL 38, 360 and *Sermo* 117, 3, 5: PL 38, 663). The God of our faith has revealed himself as HE WHO IS; and he has made himself known as "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (*Ex* 34:6). God's very being is Truth and Love.

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Incarnation of God's Son reveals that God is the eternal Father and that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, in the Father and with the Father the Son is one and the same God.

The mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (*Jn* 14:26) and by the Son "from the Father" (*Jn* 15:26), reveals that, with them, the Spirit is one and the same God. "With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed). "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son" (St. Augustine, *De Trin.* 15, 26, 47: PL 42, 1095).

By the grace of Baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death in eternal light (cf. Paul VI, *CPG* § 9).

"Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal" (Athanasian Creed: DS 75; ND 16).

Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are also inseparable in what they do. But within the single divine operation each shows forth what is proper to him in the Trinity, especially in the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The name Jesus means "God saves". The child born of the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins" (*Mt* 1:21): "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:12). The title "Christ" means "Anointed One" (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (*Acts* 10:38). He was the one "who is to come" (*Lk* 7:19), the object of "the hope of Israel" (*Acts* 28:20).

The title "Son of God" signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: he is the only Son of the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (cf. *Jn* 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. *Acts* 8:37; *1 Jn* 2:23).

The title "Lord" indicates divine sovereignty. To confess or invoke Jesus as Lord is to believe in his divinity. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (*1 Cor* 12:3).

"Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (*Gal* 4:6). From the beginning to the end of time, whenever God sends his Son, he always sends his Spirit: their mission is conjoined and inseparable.

In the fullness of time the Holy Spirit completes in Mary all the preparations for Christ's coming among the People of God. By the action of the Holy Spirit in her, the Father gives the world Emmanuel "God-with-us" (*Mt* 1:23). The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men.