

07-08 Non-Gathered Session #2

Theme: God Our Heavenly Father

Summary

- The Trinity is the mystery of one God in three persons. It is the central mystery of the Christian faith, and we call it a mystery because it cannot be understood only by reason—God alone can make it known to us.
- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three Gods, but one God. To use philosophical terms, they share the same "substance" or "essence." Yet we believe that the three are also distinct from one another. They are really three different "persons," not just three ways of describing how God works.
- The central thing that the Trinity teaches us is that God is not solitary. God exists as a communion of persons who perfectly communicate with one another and perfectly support one another.
- Jesus is God the Father's divine Son, who has existed with the Father for all eternity. When Jesus Christ took on human nature, he was able to reveal his Father to us in the way that only a child can speak about a parent.
- There is no creature, no power, and no force anywhere in creation that is more powerful than God is. In describing this we sometimes say that God is omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (God is everywhere), and omniscient (all-knowing).
- You might be asking yourself, "If we call God Father, does this mean the Catholic Church teaches that God is male?" Absolutely not. In fact, the Catechism says, "God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature" (*Catechism*, number 239).
- Although Catholics honor in a special way the image of God as loving Father, we recognize that any human image we have of God is incomplete.
- God is truth. God is love. In the end these two statements probably say more about God than anything else we could say. 1. Cf. *Isaiah* 66:13; *Psalms* 131:2.

(The quotation labeled *Catechism* is from the English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America,

62 number 239. Copyright © 1994 by the United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.)

(All summary points are taken from *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, by Brian Singer-Towns et al. [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004], pages 41–46. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

I. Read the following scripture passages and write the image of God that is being expressed.

- 2 Samuel 22:1-4 _____
- Wisdom of Solomon 7:23 – 8:8 _____
- Isaiah 49: 13-16 _____
- Isaiah 61:10 _____
- Isaiah 64:8 _____
- Hosea 11:1-7 _____
- Luke 15:1-7 & Luke 158-10 _____
- John 10 1-18 _____

II. Read the following passage entitled “Proofs for the Existence of God” and summarize in your own words.

III. Read following passage entitled “The Problem of Evil.” If God is the creator of everything, explain (in your own words) the existence of evil in your school, in your community, and/or in the world? Read the following Bible verses to help shape your answer:

- Genesis 8:21
- Matthew 6:13
- Romans 7:19
- Hebrews 10:22

The Problem of Evil

If God is all good, why did He create a world in which there is so much pain and suffering caused by natural disasters and by the evil choices that human beings make? The Catechism has an excellent response to this question that can only be summarized here. If you want to read the entire answer, check out paragraph numbers 309 through 314 of the Catechism.

The problem of evil is pressing and unavoidable, and no quick answer will suffice for those who have experienced pain and suffering. Only the Christian faith as a whole provides the answer to the question

God could have chosen to create a world so perfect that physical evil did not exist, but in his wisdom and goodness he created a world that is still journeying to its ultimate perfection. This means that physical evil will exist alongside of physical good until creation reaches its ultimate perfection.

God also chose to give men and angels free will so that we could journey freely to our ultimate destiny. Besides making good choices that bring greater love into the world, we can also make sinful choices that bring evil into the world. God does not in any way cause moral evil, but he respects our freedom by allowing us to choose it.

Finally, and this is the cause of our hope, nothing is so evil that God cannot cause a good thing to come from it: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God” (Romans 8:28). All the saints affirm this truth.

Existence of God

Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), known as a doctor of the Church, developed the following five proofs (quinque viae) for the existence of God:

- 1) Life is in motion. For life to be in motion, there must have been a “first mover” to get everything going. That mover is God.
- 2) An egg cannot just cause itself to be an egg. There must be a cause outside of the egg (in other words, a rooster and a hen!) that causes it to be an egg. Likewise there must be a first cause outside of all creation that caused creation to come into existence, and that first cause is God.
- 3) For the possibility of everything else to exist, by necessity there had to be something in existence first. This something we call God.
- 4) There is something we call truest and best against which we measure everything else that is true and good. This something isn’t just an abstract concept but is God.

- 5) The order in nature isn't just a happy accident. An intelligent being exists to direct all things to their natural end, and this being we call God.

These are not scientific proofs, but they are arguments based on philosophical reason. Saint Thomas Aquinas is trying to let us know that something greater than humankind must have set creation in motion. This something we call God, because by definition God is greater than anything else we can imagine.