

# RCIA

Mystery of the One God, Trinity

Reading: CCC 198-267; CCC 33–50

“I believe in one God.”

**CCCC 36. Why does the Profession of Faith begin with the words, “I believe in God”?**

The Profession of Faith begins with these words because the affirmation “I believe in God” is the most important, the source of all the other truths about man and about the world, and about the entire life of everyone who believes in God.

CCC 198 Our profession of faith begins with God, for God is the First and the Last, the beginning and the end of everything. The Credo begins with God the Father, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God’s works.

“I believe in one God.”

CCC 200 These are the words with which the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed begins. The confession of God’s oneness, which has its roots in the divine revelation of the Old Covenant, is inseparable from the profession of God’s existence and is equally fundamental. God is unique; there is only one God: “The Christian faith confesses that God is one in nature, substance, and essence.”

“I believe in one God.”

**CCCC 37. Why does one profess belief that there is only one God?**

Belief in the one God is professed because he has revealed himself to the people of Israel as the only One when he said, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (*Deuteronomy* 6:4) and “there is no other” (*Isaiah* 45:22). Jesus himself confirmed that God is “the one Lord” (*Mark* 12:29). To confess that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are also God and Lord does not introduce any division into the one God.

“I believe in one God.”

**CCCC 38. With what name does God reveal Himself?**

God revealed himself to Moses as the living God, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob” (*Exodus* 3:6). God also revealed to Moses his mysterious name “I Am Who I Am (YHWH)”. Already in Old Testament times this ineffable name of God was replaced by the divine title *Lord*. Thus in the New Testament, Jesus who was called *Lord* is seen as true God.

“I believe in one God.”

**CCCC 39. Is God the only One who “is”?**

Since creatures have received everything they are and have from God, only God in himself *is* the fullness of being and of every perfection. God is “He who is” without origin and without end. Jesus also reveals that he bears the divine name “I Am” (*John 8:28*).

- “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

“I believe in one God.”

**CCCC 40. Why is the revelation of God's name important?**

In revealing his name, God makes known the riches contained in the ineffable mystery of his being. He alone is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the One who transcends the world and history. It is he who made heaven and earth. He is the faithful God, always close to his people, in order to save them. He is the highest holiness, “rich in mercy” (*Ephesians 2:4*), always ready to forgive. He is the One who is spiritual, transcendent, omnipotent, eternal, personal, and perfect. He is truth and love.

“I believe in one God.” God is Truth and Love

John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

CCCC 41 God is Truth itself and as such he can neither deceive nor be deceived. He is “light, and in him there is no darkness” (1 *John* 1:5). The eternal Son of God, the incarnation of wisdom, was sent into the world “to bear witness to the Truth” (*John* 18:37).



“I believe in one God.” God is Love

**CCCC 42. In what way does God reveal that he is love?**

God revealed himself to Israel as the One who has a stronger love than that of parents for their children or of husbands and wives for their spouses. God in himself “is love” (*1 John 4: 8.16*), who gives himself completely and gratuitously, who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that the world might be saved through him” (*John 3:16-17*). By sending his Son and the Holy Spirit, God reveals that he himself is an eternal exchange of love.

# “I believe in one God.” God Provides

## **CCCC 43. What does it mean to believe in only one God?**

To believe in the one and only God involves coming to know his greatness and majesty. It involves living in thanksgiving and trusting always in him, even in adversity. It involves knowing the unity and true dignity of all human beings, created in his image. It involves making good use of the things which he has created.

- Connection between the oneness of God and our love for God:

Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

# The Mystery of the Trinity

- God revealed Himself progressively and gradually to Israel. The fullness of revelation is the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

## **CCCC 44. What is the central mystery of Christian faith and life?**

The central mystery of Christian faith and life is the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

## **45. Can the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity be known by the light of human reason alone?**

God has left some traces of his trinitarian being in creation and in the Old Testament but his inmost being as the Holy Trinity is a mystery which is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of the Son of God and the sending of the Holy Spirit. This mystery was revealed by Jesus Christ and it is the source of all the other mysteries.

# The Mystery of the Trinity

## Matthew 16:13-18

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?”  
14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the **Son of the living God.**” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but **my Father** who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.

# The Mystery of the Trinity

CCC 240 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” (Matthew 11:27).

**CCCC 46 What did Jesus Christ reveal to us about the mystery of the Father?**

Jesus Christ revealed to us that God is “Father”, not only insofar as he created the universe and the mankind, but above all because he eternally generated in his bosom the Son who is his Word, “the radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature” (*Hebrews 1:3*).

# The Mystery of the Trinity

## Jesus' Claim to Be the Unique Son of the Father

### Matthew 11:25-30

25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; 26 yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. 27 All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and 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. 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

# The Mystery of the Trinity

CCC 241 For this reason 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.”

# The Mystery of the Trinity

## **47. Who is the Holy Spirit revealed to us by Jesus Christ?**

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity. He is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son. He “proceeds from the Father” (*John 15:26*) who is the principle without a principle and the origin of all trinitarian life. He proceeds also from the Son (*Filioque*) by the eternal Gift which the Father makes of him to the Son. Sent by the Father and the Incarnate Son, the Holy Spirit guides the Church “to know all truth” (*John 16:13*).



# The Mystery of the Trinity

## **CCCC 48. How does the Church express her trinitarian faith?**

The Church expresses her Trinitarian faith by professing a belief in the oneness of God in whom there are three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three divine Persons are only one God because each of them equally possesses the fullness of the one and indivisible divine nature. They are **really distinct from each other by reason of the relations** which place them in correspondence to each other. The Father generates the Son; the Son is generated by the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

- Three **Persons** in one divine **nature** and one divine being.
- Nature answers the question: what? And person answers the question: who?

# The Mystery of the Trinity

CCC 253 The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the “consubstantial Trinity.” The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: “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, i.e., by nature one God.” In the words of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215): “Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature.

# The Mystery of the Trinity

CCC 254 The divine persons are really distinct from one another. **“God is one but not solitary.”** “Father,” “Son,” “Holy Spirit” are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another: “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.” 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.” The divine Unity is Triune.

- In God’s own inner life there is the mystery of communion and love.
- The complementarity and communion in creation has its source in the mysterious communion of “persons” in God’s inner eternal life.

# The Mystery of the Trinity

CCC 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.” Indeed **“everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship.”** “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.”

# The Mystery of the Trinity: Missions

CCC 257 “O blessed light, O Trinity and first Unity!” God is eternal blessedness, undying life, unfading light. God is love: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God freely wills to communicate the glory of his blessed life. Such is the “plan of his loving kindness,” conceived by the Father before the foundation of the world, in his beloved Son: “He destined us in love to be **his sons**” and “to be **conformed to the image of his Son**,” through “the **spirit of sonship**” (Eph 1:4–5, 9; Rom 8:15, 29). This plan is a “grace [which] was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (2 Tim 1:9-10), stemming immediately from Trinitarian love. It unfolds in the work of creation, the whole history of salvation after the fall, and the missions of the Son and the Spirit, which are continued in the mission of the Church.

# The Mystery of the Trinity

## **CCCC 49. How do the three divine Persons work?**

Inseparable in their one substance, the three divine Persons are also inseparable in their activity. The Trinity has one operation, sole and the same. In this one divine action, however, each Person is present according to the mode which is proper to him in the Trinity.

CCC 258 Thus 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.” It is above all the divine missions of the Son’s Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit that show forth the properties of the divine persons.

# The Mystery of the Trinity

CCC 260 The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity.<sup>100</sup> But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity: "If a man loves me," says the Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him":<sup>101</sup> (1050, 1721; 1997)

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.

# Fittingness of the Trinity

- Since God is the source of all good and all perfection, He must possess everything that we know to be good, while subtracting from Him all limitation. In our experience we grasp that inter-personal communion and love, consisting in mutual self-giving, is a great good. A personal being is one capable of knowing and loving, and who thus finds his perfection in knowing and self-giving love. If a person does not give himself to another person in love, his life is frustrated, as experienced by Adam in the Garden before the creation of Eve.
- John Paul II expressed this beautifully in *Redemptor Hominis* 10: “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”



# Fittingness of the Trinity

- The highest form of love is love of benevolence or friendship—willing the good for another in such a way that we give ourselves to the other. Such a love implies a plurality of persons.
- If God were a solitary being without interpersonal communion in His own nature, two unfitting consequences would follow. First of all, God would be deprived of a supreme perfection, the possibility of self-giving love, in His own inner divine life. Secondly, He would be dependent on creatures to realize this activity of love. Both possibilities seem incompatible with the perfection of God's nature.
- John Paul II perfectly captured the fittingness of the doctrine of the Trinity: “It has been said, in a beautiful and profound way, that our God in his deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since he has in himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love.”

# Fittingness of the Trinity: Generation of the Word

- In human beings, the interior operation of knowledge is fruitful in that it produces an interior word—the concept. Now it is reasonable to think that God’s eternal operation of knowing would be no less fruitful, and thus it should produce an interior word in God, a perfect Word or Image of the Father. However, everything that can be said to be in God *is* God, for God is absolutely simple. The Word of God thus *is* God, and says everything that He is.

# Fittingness of the Trinity: Generation of the Word

- Likewise it is reasonable to think that the eternal operation of love that is in God would also be fruitful, producing an eternal *Gift of self* which would ultimately also be God, for God is love. This procession of love in God is indeed the procession of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son as their mutual love. The Holy Spirit is the bond of unity between Father and Son.
- The Trinity has an eternal order: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.