

Living in Christ

Jesus Christ

God's Love Made Visible

Second Edition

Carrie J. Schroeder

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Introduction

“Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’” (John 20:18).

How amazing it must have been for Mary of Magdala to proclaim those powerful words of faithful witness on that first Easter morning: “I have seen the Lord.” Sometimes I have wondered, if I had been there at the empty tomb with her, would I have had the challenges to my faith that I have encountered? The people who saw, knew, and talked with Jesus during his earthly ministry witnessed his miracles firsthand and heard his powerful preaching and storytelling with their own ears. Some even saw him alive after he had risen from the dead. Yet we know from Sacred Scripture that some of the disciples, like Peter and Thomas, did experience moments of profound doubt. They had been blessed with the privilege of walking with Jesus, seeing him face-to-face, feeling his touch, and hearing his voice. With that blessing, though, came the task of accepting that the one they had known personally as their teacher, companion, and friend was, in fact, more than all these things: he was the Word Made Flesh (see John 1:14).

I have come to understand that my own life of faith follows a similar pattern of knowing Jesus yet still experiencing moments when my faith is challenged. I have been blessed with the knowledge that Jesus is alive, present, and active in my life, daily offering me strength, grace, wisdom, guidance, and salvation. And yet, to be completely honest, with that blessing comes what is sometimes a hard task, even a struggle: to understand fully what having a relationship with Jesus means. What does it mean for me to say that I, as a member of the Body of Christ, the Church, dwell in a relationship of love, trust, and friendship with Jesus?

One of the ways I have tried, throughout my life, to answer that question has been through study. When I was a student in a Catholic high school, my religious studies classes were among my favorites. In high school I finally began to explore not just *what* Catholics believe but *why*; not just how to *read* the Bible but how to *apply* it to my life; and not just what prayer *is* but how to *really pray*. Studying cultivated my faith, and that faith grew stronger the more that I learned and put it into practice. After high school I continued to follow a path that I found to be both intellectually and spiritually fruitful: I majored in religious studies in college. When I completed my graduate degree in theology, I began teaching religious studies in a Catholic high school, not unlike the one I had attended years before. Through these many years, study of Scripture and Sacred Tradition has truly helped me to grow my faith in Jesus. Study has enabled me

to root that faith—including its more affective or emotional aspects—in something solid, something that truly nurtures, challenges, and enlivens my whole self: mind, heart, body, and spirit.

One of the greatest privileges of my life has been to serve as a religious studies teacher and campus minister. In that role I have been delighted by the opportunity to accompany young people, like you, on their journey of faith. I love your exuberant energy, your joy in living, your passion for justice, your challenging spirit, your intellectual curiosity, and your fierce loyalty: these are wonderful gifts you bring to our Church and to our world! If you bring all of these gifts to bear on your study of Jesus this semester, I guarantee that you will not be disappointed. Your efforts will return to you many times over, in the form of greater clarity of belief, deeper trust in God, and a more profound sense of purpose for your life.

This course begins by reflecting on the greatest mystery of our faith, the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We then look at how God has revealed himself throughout history and most fully in his Son, Jesus Christ. We will see how Jesus reveals to us what it means to be a child of God and how we are to live and act upon our faith.

As you learn about Jesus through this book and in this course, my sincere hope is that your academic work takes deep root in you, opening your mind, touching your heart, and nourishing your soul, so that you may grow and flourish as the person of faith you were created to be. I pray that all your work may draw you more completely into a loving relationship with the One who came so that we might have life, and have it more abundantly (see John 10:10). May you, like Mary of Magdala so long ago, see the Risen Lord alive and active, and may you be forever changed by that life-giving encounter.

Wishing you every grace and blessing,
Carrie J. Schroeder
Editor, First Edition

Unit

1

The Trinity

In this unit, we will examine the mystery of the Trinity and the development of Trinitarian doctrine in the Catholic Church. Furthermore, we will explore what the terms *monotheism* and *Trinitarianism* really mean to the Catholic faith. Throughout the coursework of this unit, we will discover exactly what makes up each Divine Person, and we will also follow the development of the Church's teachings about the Holy Trinity.

At the core of the Catholic faith is the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the truth that there is one God in three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In chapter 1, we will analyze exactly what it means to be both monotheistic and Trinitarian. We will also consider what Sacred Scripture reveals about the Trinity. As we make our way further through chapter 1, we will learn about the distinct origin and work of each Divine Person in the Holy Trinity, as well as how they are united.

The Trinity is a complex reality to understand and explain. The truth of our Trinitarian faith was revealed to the earliest Christians and is present in Sacred Scripture. Chapter 2 takes us into the development of Trinitarian doctrine. We will see how the early Church worked at developing a clear language about the mystery of the Trinity, including the Church's response to early challenges and heresies about the Trinity and Jesus' place in it. Finally, we will see how the Trinity is a model for human relationships.

The enduring understandings and essential questions represent core concepts and questions that are explored throughout this unit. By studying the content of each chapter, you will gain a more complete understanding of the following:

Enduring Understandings

1. The mystery of the Trinity is the central mystery of the Catholic faith.
2. The Church developed the doctrine of the Trinity over centuries through the early Ecumenical Councils and the work of the Church Fathers.
3. The Trinity is a model for living in relationship with others.

Essential Questions

1. Why is the Trinity considered to be a mystery of faith?
2. How has the Church expressed and explained the doctrine of the Trinity throughout the centuries?
3. How should our human relationships reflect what we see in the Trinity?

God Is One: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Introduction

The faith of Catholics is rooted in the truth that there is one God in three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Belief in one God is called monotheism. Belief that God is three Divine Persons in One is called Trinitarianism. Trying to understand how Catholics can hold both beliefs is confusing for many people. How is it possible to be both monotheistic and Trinitarian? If God is a Holy Trinity, who are these three Persons? How are they united, and how is each Divine Person distinct? Throughout this chapter, we will see how God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, is the source of all life, the creator of all that is known and unknown. Furthermore, we will witness how God wants us to be in a loving relationship with him. We will explore how the Son, Jesus Christ, is fully God and fully man, having assumed the form of a man to assure us our salvation. Finally, we will investigate the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, as he shares the mission of Jesus to bring us into the Church, the Body of Christ, as adopted children of God.

Article 1: God Is One: Catholics Are Monotheistic

The belief in and worship of only one God is called **monotheism**. Throughout much of human history, people of many cultures have practiced polytheism, which is the belief in many gods. You may have studied some polytheistic cultures, like ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, in other courses in school. You may know Hindus or Shintoists who worship many gods. When God began a **covenant** relationship with Abraham, he was revealing an essential truth: there is only one God, the Lord of all the earth. Over time Abraham and Sarah's descendants, who would become known as the Jews, understood and embraced this monotheistic faith.

As Jewish people came to fully understand and embrace this monotheistic faith, they incorporated this belief into their prayer and worship. The Shema, the prayer uttered daily by faithful Jews of ancient times and the present day, begins with these words, found in a slightly different form in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!" (*Shema Yisrael, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai ehad*). The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, consistently reveals that there is only one true God. For instance, in the Gospel of Mark, a scribe asks Jesus which is the first of all the Commandments (see 12:28). Jesus quotes the words of the Shema, replying, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength'" (Mark 12:29–30). Jesus himself tells us there is only one God.

One God or Three Gods?

When the early Christians first began to understand, speak, and write about the **doctrine** of the **Trinity**, many people thought they were rejecting monotheism in favor of polytheism. Even today praying "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" may lead some people to mistakenly think that Christians have



monotheism

The belief in and worship of only one God.

covenant

A personal, solemn promise of faithful love that involves mutual commitments and creates a sacred relationship.

doctrine

An official, authoritative teaching of the Church based on the Revelation of God.

Trinity

From the Latin *trinus*, meaning "threefold," referring to the central mystery of the Christian faith that God exists as a communion of three distinct and interrelated Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to human reason alone and is known through Divine Revelation only.



Nicene Creed

The formal statement or profession of Christian belief originally formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and amplified at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

three gods, not one. Those who mistakenly believe that Catholics worship Mary or other saints may even think we have four or more gods. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* firmly states our belief in one God. “To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith. This is not contrary to belief in the One God. Nor does believing in the Holy Spirit as ‘Lord and giver of life’ introduce any division into the One God” (202). Catholics have always affirmed the truth that God is one. Indeed we profess this each week at Sunday liturgy when we pray the **Nicene Creed**: “I believe in one God.”

Why do you think belief in a Trinitarian God can be difficult to understand for some people?

Did You Know?

Three Major Monotheistic Religions



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Only Christians have recognized God as Trinity—one God in three Divine Persons. However, we share our belief in one God with Judaism and Islam.

The very heart of Judaism is monotheism, as reflected in the Shema, which faithful Jews pray daily. Followers of Islam also profess belief in one God. They too proclaim their monotheism as part of their regular prayer. Each day faithful Muslims repeat the *Shahadah*. It is translated: “There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”

The Second Vatican Council spoke of the “common spiritual heritage” shared by Jews and Christians (*Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions [Nostra Aetate, 1965], 4*). In this same document, the council said this about Muslims: “They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to humanity” (3).

To understand what Catholics share with Jews and Muslims does not in any way lessen the truth of our Catholic beliefs. Rather, it helps us to appreciate and marvel at the many people of different times and places who have recognized the reality that there is only one God, Creator of all.

Article 2: God Is Three-In-One: Catholics Are Trinitarian

The mystery of the Holy Trinity—the mystery of one God in three Divine Persons—is a unique defining trait of Christian faith. The Trinity is the Church’s most important and fundamental teaching and the central mystery of our faith, which only God can fully reveal to us. Every prayer we pray and every Sacrament we celebrate is done in the name of this Triune, or three-in-one, God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity: United, Yet Distinct

The three Divine Persons are inseparable both in what they are and in what they do. They are inseparable in what they *are* because each Divine Person is fully God—complete, whole, and entire. All of God is contained in God the Father. All of God is contained in God the Son. All of God is contained in God the Holy Spirit. They are inseparable in what they *do* because each Divine Person has the same job description, so to speak. Each of the three Persons is engaged in the work of our salvation. Each acts to create us in love, redeem us, and make us holy. As the *Catechism* states, “The whole **divine economy** is the common work of the three divine persons” (258). The work and mission of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable. But each Divine Person contributes his own unique qualities to this common work. It was the Son who became **incarnate**, assuming a human nature. It is the Holy Spirit who is sent into each believer’s heart and is sent to guide the Church.

Even though they are inseparable, the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are truly distinct from one another. This distinction does not divide the divine unity. The Father, Son, and Spirit are in perfect communion with one another.



divine economy

Also known as the economy of salvation, this refers to God’s eternal plan and his actions for the salvation of humanity.

incarnate, Incarnation

From the Latin, meaning “to become flesh,” referring to the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Divine Son of God, becoming man. In the Incarnation, Jesus Christ became truly man while remaining truly God.

The three Divine Persons of the Trinity are also distinct in their origins. It is proper to speak of the Father as the generator, even though all three Divine Persons are eternal, existing without beginning or end. We express this mystery of faith by saying that the Son is begotten of the Father and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

If the Persons of the Trinity are united, how are they distinct? First, each carries out the work of our salvation in the way that is most proper. For example, God the Father draws us to follow Christ; God the Son became incarnate; God the Holy Spirit gives us the gifts of the Spirit. Second, the three Persons are distinct in their relationship to one another. God the Father is *unbegotten*, meaning he has always existed without beginning or end. God the Son is *begotten* of God the Father. In the words of the Nicene Creed, Jesus is “the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.” The Holy Spirit is sent out into the world, *proceeding from* the Father and the Son.

Primary Sources

The Athanasian Creed

Rarely used today, the Athanasian Creed was once commonly recited in the liturgy of Trinity Sunday. This statement of faith dates back to about the fifth century, and although it was probably not written by the great Doctor of the Church Saint Athanasius (297–373), it bears his name. Below is an excerpt from this beautiful meditation on the mystery of the Trinity:

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. . . . The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. . . . So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almighties but One Almighty.

The Trinity Is Revealed by God in Sacred Scripture

Although the Church did not fully articulate the doctrine of the Trinity until the Ecumenical Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, the presence of the Trinity is clear in Sacred Scripture, especially in the New Testament. For example, in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus “rejoiced [in] the holy Spirit” (10:21), stating that “[n]o one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son” (10:22). In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9). Later in the Gospel of John, just hours before his Death, Jesus prays to God the Father for his disciples, asking “that they may be one just as we are” (17:11). Finally, at the very end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus commissions his disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit” (28:19). These and other passages help us to understand that the God revealed to us in Scripture is a Trinity of Divine Persons. Let’s now take a closer look at the distinct qualities of each of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The mystery of the Trinity is revealed in the Scripture and Tradition. How would you explain this mystery to someone who has never heard of it?



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How do you use Sacred Scripture to help you understand aspects of your faith, such as the Trinity?

Article 3: The First Person of the Trinity: God the Father

As you’ve already read in this chapter, God the Father is the First Person of the Trinity. He is the Eternal Source of all that exists. As we profess in the Nicene Creed, God the Father is the “maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” Many religions, including Judaism,



filial

Having to do with the relationship of a child to his or her parent.

have understood God as Father, reflecting that God is the Creator and Lord of all the earth. When we profess that God is our Father, we acknowledge that he is the source of all life; that all creation exists because of him. Further, we acknowledge that God is all-powerful and desires to be in an intimate, loving relationship with his creation. He loves us, cares for us, provides for us, heals us, forgives us, and is just and faithful. Even if the love of an earthly father—or mother, or friend, or any other person—disappoints us, God’s faithful love will never, ever fail us.

Jesus Reveals God the Father

In the Gospels, Jesus calls God *Abba*, which, in his native language of Aramaic, means “Father.” This reveals two things about Jesus’ relationship with God the Father:

- Jesus’ relationship with God is **filial**—that is, a father-son relationship. In prayer Jesus knew his Father’s unconditional love, strength, and guidance. But even more important, Jesus reveals a new way of understanding God as Father—as the First Person of the Trinity, the Eternal Father of the Eternal Son.
- Jesus’ relationship with God the Father is an intimate one. In Jesus’ prayer, we see him speaking to his Father directly and personally, revealing his inner thoughts and feelings (see Matthew 11:25–26 and Mark 14:36). One way Jesus teaches us about God the Father is through his parables. For example, in the parable commonly known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son (see Luke 15:11–32), Jesus tells the story of a father who loves both of his sons with patience, compassion, and joy. In this parable, Jesus gives us a clear depiction of the gentle, transforming love of God the Father.

We Are God’s Adopted Children

Jesus does more than teach about his loving Father. He actually invites us to call God “Father” ourselves. In

doing so, Jesus invites us into the close relationship he has with his Divine Father—into the communion of the Holy Trinity. Through Baptism we become God the Father’s adopted daughters and sons. Saint Paul writes:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘*Abba, Father!*’ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:15–17)

This does not mean that God cares for us only if we are baptized. On the one hand, the Church does not recognize any means other than Baptism to reach true **beatitude**. On the other hand, we believe that God’s infinite love and tender mercy extend to all people, even in ways we cannot fully understand.

Is God Male?

The answer to that question is a most definite no. To say that God is our Father is to talk about the first Person of the Trinity, the Father of the Eternal Son, who has



beatitude

The state of eternal happiness with God in Heaven.



Live It! God Is a Loving Parent

When we call God “Father,” we are reminded that we are his children. This means we are blessed with a heavenly Father who loves and cares for us and whom we can always turn to. God is a great parent who wants to listen and provide support. He is always there no matter our mood or situation. We can tell him about triumphs, defeats, hopes, and fears. We can ask for help, advice, or forgiveness.

Have you ever talked with God as if you were talking with a loving parent? For the next three days, write down three or four things each day that happen to you or that you need support or guidance on. It could be as simple as “I got an A on a test,” “Volleyball practice was hard today,” or “I was really lonely at lunch.” At the end of each day, spend time going through the list and talking with God about each item. Tell him what is going on in your life, ask for his help and protection, and thank him for being with you.

adopted us as sons and daughters. It does not mean God is a human being. It also does not mean God is literally male. Both Judaism and Christianity have always maintained that God has no gender. In other words, God is neither male nor female. Jesus affirms this in his conversation with a Samaritan woman when he asserts that “God is Spirit” (John 4:24). The *Catechism* reminds us that God has characteristics we associate with both fathers and mothers when it states: “God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood,¹ which emphasizes God’s immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. . . . We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes” (239).

Both the Old and New Testaments use a great variety of symbolic images when speaking about God. Some of these are masculine images, like “the Lord, your God, carried you, as one carries his own child, all along your journey” (Deuteronomy 1:31). Other images are feminine. Jesus tells a parable about a woman searching for a lost coin (see Luke 15:8–10). The woman represents God,

who patiently searches for us when we are “lost” in sin. Others are neither masculine nor feminine, like Psalm 19, which describes God as “my rock” (verse 15). Praying with many scriptural images helps us to deepen our relationship with God. It reminds us that no human language can ever fully capture or describe the Divine Mystery.

What are some of your favorite images of God?



Article 4: The Second Person of the Trinity: God the Son

The Second Person of the Trinity is God the Son, Jesus Christ, who assumed a human nature for our salvation. Jesus Christ is both truly and fully God and truly and fully man. He has a unique relationship with God the Father: he is the only, and the Eternal, Son of God.

Jesus Is Truly God

Several New Testament passages may help us to understand that Jesus is truly God, who became flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, the prologue to John's Gospel states:

And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.

(1:14)

John's Gospel also contains another often-quoted line about the purpose of the Incarnation: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal

Pray It!

Blessed Be God Forever!

"**B**lessed are you, Lord, God of all creation." The celebrant says these words while praying during the Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts. The prayers he says emphasize that it is through God's goodness that we have the bread and wine to offer. It is because of God's power that they will become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The following prayer is the conclusion to a novena honoring the Body and Blood of Christ. Pray this as a thanksgiving for the great sacrament of Holy Communion:

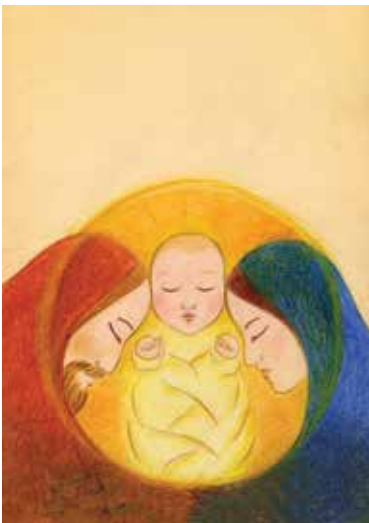
O Jesus, since You have left us a remembrance of Your Passion beneath the veils of this Sacrament, grant us, we pray, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Your Body and Blood that we may always enjoy the fruits of Your Redemption, for You live and reign forever. Amen.



Reign of God

The reign or rule of God over the hearts of people and, as a consequence of that, the development of a new social order based on unconditional love. The fullness of God's Reign will not be realized until the end of time. Also called the Kingdom of God.

The Nativity is a reminder of the Incarnation. Why do you think God chose to enter the world in the form of an infant born in a manger?



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life” (3:16). In his Letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul says this of Jesus:

. . . though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance.
(2:6–7)

These and other Scripture passages help us to understand that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—a title that signifies his unique and eternal relationship with God the Father. He is truly God’s own self made flesh among us.

Jesus Is Truly Man

Jesus is not only truly and fully God but also truly and fully man. He is not only the Son of God but also the Son of the Virgin Mary. Saint Paul writes in his Letter to the Galatians: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (4:4). Jesus Christ has a fully human nature. So, he is able to teach us, through his words and actions, how we are to live as sons and daughters of God. Specifically, Jesus teaches us to love one another—even our enemies—as God the Father has loved him and as he has loved us. He teaches us to love the truth, to pray always in faith, and to forgive those who have wronged us. By assuming human nature, Jesus has shown us how to live in a way that reflects the fullness and beauty of the **Reign of God**.

Why Did God Become Incarnate?

The name Jesus, given to him by the angel Gabriel, means “God saves” in Hebrew. This tells us that the

Incarnation is part of salvation history: God's eternal plan to redeem and save humanity. The *Catechism* states that God became incarnate for the following four reasons (see 457–460):

- to save us by reconciling us to himself
- to share divine love with us
- to show us how to be holy
- to enable us to share in God's divine nature

Athanasius, a fourth-century saint, says that “the Son of God became man so that we might become God²” (460).

Christ: The Anointed One

Christ is a title given to Jesus, based on the Greek word *christos*, which means “anointed one.” The Hebrew equivalent is **Messiah**. In the ancient world, anointing with oil symbolized being chosen by God for some special mission or purpose. For example, in the Old Testament, priests, prophets, and kings were anointed as they prepared to undertake their new role in the community. In the case of Jesus, he is anointed by the Holy Spirit at his human birth, anointed to be our Savior and Redeemer.

For what special mission or purpose do you think God is calling you?

Article 5: The Third Person of the Trinity: God the Holy Spirit

The Third Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Nicene Creed, the Holy Spirit is “the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” The Holy Spirit has been active since the time of Creation, speaking to God's people through the ancient prophets and anointing Jesus for his special mission to redeem and save us.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, but they are inseparable from one another. From the



Christ

From the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, meaning “anointed.” It became the name proper to Jesus because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission of priest, prophet, and king, signified by his anointing as Messiah.

Messiah

Hebrew word for “anointed one.” The equivalent Greek term is *christos*. Jesus is the Christ and the Messiah because he is the Anointed One.



Pentecost

The fiftieth day following Easter, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the early Apostles and disciples.

beginning of time until the end of time, wherever the Father sends his Son, he also sends his Spirit. The Son and the Holy Spirit share a joint mission to bring us into the Body of Christ as God's adopted sons and daughters. However, the Holy Spirit was not fully revealed until after Jesus' Death and Resurrection.

Promised by Jesus, Given at Pentecost

In John's Gospel, we read that when Jesus knew that the hour of his Death was near, he promised his disciples that he would ask God to send them an advocate (in Greek, *paraclete*). An advocate is someone who is on our side, to help us, strengthen us, and empower us for holiness. This advocate Jesus promised is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit would teach them everything they need to know.

After Jesus died and rose from the dead, he made good on his promise. The Risen Lord appeared to the disciples, breathed on them, and said, "Receive the holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Moreover, at **Pentecost**, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, now fully revealed, to be with his disciples forever—both those who were his earliest followers and those who are his followers today. The Acts of the Apostles describes Pentecost in this way: "And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which

parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit . . ." (2:2–4).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies the People of God by offering us seven gifts to help us as we strive to live as Christians. Receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit means that the mission of Jesus became the mission



of the Church. In fact, it becomes *our* mission. Through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to be true followers of Christ. (See the table “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit” for a list of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and a brief explanation of how each strengthens us as followers of Christ.) When we allow the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to work in us, we follow the way of Jesus by sharing God’s love with our friends and families, being a loving presence to those in need, and preaching the Good News through our words and actions. Because Jesus is no longer physically present here on earth, the **Paraclete** blesses and strengthens our efforts to live as Jesus did: bringing justice, peace, and truth to all those we meet.



Paraclete

A term meaning “advocate” or “helper,” used in the Gospel of John to describe the Holy Spirit, the third Divine Person of the Trinity, whom Jesus promised to the disciples as an advocate and counselor.



Faith in Action

The Trinity in Action

The Trinity is not simply an abstract concept. Understanding God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit leads us to an understanding of ourselves and our own human dignity. We are made in the image and likeness of God.

In the twelfth century, one group of religious brothers understood this well. Called the Trinitarians, they were founded by Saint John of Matha to redeem captives and ransom slaves. They not only helped captives and slaves in material and spiritual ways. When necessary, a Trinitarian would offer to trade his own life for the life of a captive!

Why? Because God is our Father, and we are brothers and sisters. Because Jesus, the Son of God, saved us and taught us to love one another, even unto death. Because the Holy Spirit inspires us and helps us to live as images of God in our world!

The Trinitarians still exist today, and include women as well. They still seek out those who “suffer uncommon hardships, especially those who suffer for their faith or who are poor” (*Constitutions of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity*). Many people today are prisoners of invisible forms of slavery: slavery to consumerism, winning at all costs, even at the expense of human dignity, and a “me-first” attitude. In 1998, Pope Saint John Paul II wrote to the Trinitarian Order: “We are on the eve of a new Christian millennium: may this prospect further encourage you to make God’s merciful face, revealed to us in the Incarnation of Christ, shine among men [meaning *people*]. Thus, you will become valiant defenders of the dignity of every human being.”

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit	
Wisdom	Opens our eyes to see God at work, even in our common, everyday experiences.
Understanding	Makes it possible for us to follow the correct course of action in difficult or confusing situations.
Counsel	Also called Right Judgment, helps us to know right from wrong and to choose the good consistently.
Fortitude	Also called Courage; enables us to do the right thing, even when we are afraid.
Knowledge	Empowers us to use our intellect to learn more about our faith.
Piety	Also called Reverence; reminds us that God is God, and enables us to recognize that all we are, all we do, and all we have comes from God.
Fear of the Lord	Also called Wonder and Awe, fills us with a spirit of profound respect as we marvel at God's power and goodness.

For which Gift of the Holy Spirit are you most grateful?

For Review

1. What is monotheism?
2. What three major religions are monotheistic?
3. What does it mean that the three Divine Persons are united? What does it mean that they are distinct?
4. What evidence does Sacred Scripture offer for the existence of the Trinity?
5. What do we acknowledge when we profess that the First Person of the Trinity is Father?
6. In the Gospels, what does Jesus reveal to us about his relation to the Father?
7. What four reasons does the *Catechism* give for the Incarnation?
8. How is the Holy Spirit the advocate for Christians throughout time?

The Development of Trinitarian Doctrine

Introduction

Have you ever studied something that you know is true but found it took a lot of effort to understand and explain it? The mystery of the Trinity is like that.

For even the most thoughtful theologian, the most distinguished philosopher, or the holiest saint, the Trinity is a complex reality to grasp and express. God revealed the truth of our Trinitarian faith to the very earliest Christians, but it took time for the Church to clarify the depths of this truth. In fact, it took several centuries for early bishops and Church Fathers to develop and agree on language that would best express the subtle nuances of one God in three Divine Persons.

During these early centuries of Church history, varied ideas about the Trinity existed, especially about Jesus' place in it. The early Church sifted through all these ideas—some correct and some incorrect. Their efforts bore fruit in the early Ecumenical Councils. These Councils produced the Nicene Creed and other clear statements of core Catholic truths. They shaped the language and direction of Trinitarian theology for centuries to come. In this chapter, we will take a look at all of these developments.

Article 6: The Early Church Faces Challenges to Apostolic Faith

After Jesus died, rose, and ascended to Heaven, the early Church faced the enormous task of precisely articulating the doctrine about the Trinity and about Jesus and defending those truths against those who challenged them. During these first centuries, bishops and **Church Fathers** worked at these tasks. They often did so in official gatherings called **Ecumenical Councils**. They developed the language that would reflect, as fully as possible, the depth, breadth, and meaning of these **sacred**, revealed truths.

Many people had their own theories about who Jesus was and what his time on earth had achieved. Many of these ideas were heresies, or false teachings. The early Church defended the true teachings passed on from the Apostles against these conflicting and false theories.



Fathers of the Church (Church Fathers)

During the early centuries of the Church, those teachers whose writings extended the Tradition of the Apostles and who continue to be important for the Church's teachings.



Live It! Take Time to Listen

How can we live a Trinitarian life, in communion with God and with others? Building on our baptismal grace that unites us in love with God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we can work toward mutual respect and love toward one another. Mutual respect and love require that we take time to listen.

Listening is not always easy. If you are preparing for a conversation you sense will be difficult, pray first. Ask the Holy Trinity for help in seeing the other person as a child of God and a brother or sister in Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you listen.

Then focus on the person speaking and give your full attention. Try not to think of what you might say in return. If you don't understand something, ask questions. Make eye contact.

When it is time for you to respond, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to speak with love and to provide the advice, encouragement, or support the other person needs.



Ecumenical Council

A gathering of the Church's bishops from around the world convened by the Pope or approved by him to address pressing issues in the Church.

sacred

The quality of being holy, worthy of respect and reverence; set apart for God.

The Early Church Develops Trinitarian Language

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul writes: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you” (13:13). Second Corinthians was written in the mid-50s AD. Saint Paul’s greeting reflects the early Church’s firm belief in the Trinity from the earliest times. As the Church’s Trinitarian doctrine developed, the Church Fathers turned to the language of **philosophy** to express the doctrine in a way that would make sense to the people of their time. This language, though often difficult for us to understand, was in common use at that time. Paragraph 252 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the following words, which are used to describe Trinitarian doctrine:

Did You Know?



Saint Irenaeus, Defender of the Faith

Saint Irenaeus (ca. 130–200) was a second-century bishop in what is now Lyons, France. As a prolific writer, he was a key figure in the many controversies that developed as the early Church sought to clarify her Trinitarian faith. His most famous work is a series of books called *Against Heresies*. In it Irenaeus stresses how crucial it was for the Church to safeguard her apostolic faith. This was the faith that Jesus had shared with the Apostles and that they had passed on to their successors. Irenaeus was particularly concerned about Gnosticism. This was one of the false teachings about Jesus that was circulating in the Church at that time. Irenaeus’s courageous effort to defend apostolic faith against Gnosticism and other heresies can inspire us. We too need to speak the truth without fear, trusting always in God’s steadfast love. Saint Irenaeus’s feast day is June 28.

- The word *substance* is used to name “the divine being in its unity.”
- The word *person* (in Greek, *hypostasis*) is used to refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each fully God, yet each distinct.
- The word *relation* is used to indicate that the distinction among the three Persons lies in the relationship of each to the others.

Developing this standard vocabulary in speaking and writing about the Trinity enabled the Church Fathers to more easily express the faith of the early Christian community and defend that faith to those who challenged it.

Have you had to learn a foreign language or a computer programming language? What were the difficulties? the rewards?

Article 7: Early Christological Heresies

How can 100 percent man and 100 percent God equal 100 percent Jesus? That just doesn't seem to add up! The mystery of Jesus' being fully man and fully God doesn't make sense as math or science. During the first several centuries of the Church, some **heresies**, or incorrect beliefs, about Jesus, developed. The early bishops and Church Fathers struggled to articulate and defend the mystery of Christ's human and divine natures against these **Christological** heresies.

Some Christological heresies downplayed or denied the divinity of Jesus. For example, Arianism claimed that Jesus was created, just as we were. Arius, its proponent, said that Jesus did not exist before he was conceived in Mary's womb. Arius believed that Jesus was a higher creature than humans but less than God. Nestorianism believed that in Jesus there were actually two persons, one divine and one human. Nestorius argued that it was wrong to say things like “God suffered and died for



philosophy

In Greek this word literally means “love of wisdom.” It refers to the study of human existence using logical reasoning.

heresy

The conscious and deliberate rejection by a baptized person of a truth of faith that must be believed.

Christological

Having to do with the branch of theology called Christology. Christology is the study of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Second Divine Person of the Trinity, and his earthly ministry and eternal mission.

us” or “God was born of the Virgin Mary.” These statements would apply to the human person Jesus, but not to the Divine Person. Nestorius was really concerned with people overemphasizing the humanity of Jesus. He would not even allow the Virgin Mary to be known as the Mother of God.

Other heresies played down the humanity of Jesus. Docetism alleged that Jesus’ humanity was a sort of disguise—he looked like a human and acted like a human, but inside, he was really just God. For example, Docetists claimed that Jesus didn’t really suffer on the cross. They said he *appeared* to be suffering, but he couldn’t *really* suffer a human death because he was God. Monophysitism believed that Jesus’ divinity fully absorbed his humanity so that, in the end, he was only divine and not human.

Gnosticism, another early Church heresy, claimed that Jesus was not a man at all, but a semidivine being. The name comes from *gnosis*, the Greek word for “knowledge.” Gnostics believe that salvation can be reached only by getting special, secret knowledge from God or God’s agent, and that God sent Jesus to share this

Primary Sources

The Words of Saint Irenaeus

Saint Irenaeus likens the eternal truth of the Catholic Church to the sun, one light illuminating the world:

[T]he Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. . . . But as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shines everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth. (Against Heresies, book 1, chapter 10)

special knowledge with a select, elite group of people he wanted to save.

Heresies Focusing on Jesus' Humanity	
Heresy	Beliefs
Arianism	Jesus was created, just as we were, and he did not exist before he was conceived in Mary's womb. Jesus was a higher creature than humans but less than God.
Nestorianism	In Jesus there were actually two persons, one divine and one human. It was improper to speak of them as one.
Heresies Focusing on Jesus' Divinity	
Docetism	Jesus' humanity was a sort of disguise—he looked like a human and acted like a human, but inside he was really just God.
Monophysitism	Jesus' divinity fully absorbed his humanity, so that, in the end, he was only divine and not human.
Gnosticism	Salvation can be attained only by a select, elite group, by acquiring special, secret knowledge from God.

The Church Defends the Truth

These Christological heresies caused a great deal of division within the early Church. Most of the heresies were incorrect teachings about either Christ's human nature or his divine nature. In response, the Church Fathers needed to present the doctrine of the Incarnation in clear, careful, and balanced teaching. We can benefit from their writings today. They are easily available to those who take the time to find them. The Incarnation is truly a mystery, but that does not mean it is completely beyond our understanding. Rather, it is a mystery of faith because its truth is so deep that we can never exhaust everything that it has to teach us.

Mary, Mother of God: The *Theotokos*

The Church's teachings and beliefs about Jesus are closely related to her teachings and beliefs about his mother, Mary. As early as the New Testament period, Mary was

revered as the Mother of Jesus. However, she did not receive the title Mother of God until the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431, when the Nestorian heresy was renounced. This Council affirmed Mary as the

Theotokos, a Greek word that literally means “God-bearer” but is often translated as “Mother of God.” Today both the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches continue to venerate Mary with this title. Honoring Mary as the *Theotokos* acknowledges the unique role she played in our salvation. She brought the presence of God into the world in a way no one else could. Because she is the Mother of Jesus, she is also the Mother of God.



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Have you ever had to defend a truth in your own life?

Pray It!

Prayer for Sharing the Truth

Pray the following prayer to seek Jesus' help in your pursuit of the truth, which is not always an easy quest.

Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary,

Sharing your truth with the world can be difficult and intimidating. Help us to speak and act in accord with your teaching. Guide us in treating all of your children with respect, care, and understanding. Inspire us to overcome any anxiety we might have in sharing your Good News with the world. Teach us to befriend, pray, and sacrifice so that all may know your truth.

Loving God, strengthen us in times we falter and struggle in sharing your Good News. Help us to always remember that you embrace us in your love and forgiveness.

Amen.

Article 8: The Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church

How did the early Church leaders come together to respond to heresies that arose in the early Church? Throughout the Church's history, bishops have met in gatherings called Ecumenical Councils to discuss the challenges facing the Church. A particular focus of the Ecumenical Councils in the early centuries of the Church was the challenges to Christological and Trinitarian doctrines. Seven Ecumenical Councils were held between AD 325 and AD 787. We will discuss the two most important of these; both of which took place in ancient cities located in modern-day Turkey.

The Council of Nicaea

In AD 325, the Council of Nicaea declared that God the Son is “of the same substance” as God the Father. In other words, Jesus is truly God. Stating and defending this belief countered the heretical claims of Arianism, which maintained that Jesus was more than an ordinary human but less than God.

The Council of Nicaea also produced the first draft of what is now known as the Nicene Creed. You may be familiar with this Creed from praying it at Sunday liturgy. When we pray the Creed, we proclaim that Jesus was “born of the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.” These lines, written nearly seventeen hundred years ago, continue to express, with both beauty and clarity, Jesus' identity as the Second Person of the Trinity.

The Council of Chalcedon

Whereas the Council of Nicaea focused on understanding the Trinity, especially the relationship and distinction between God the Father and God the Son, the Council of Chalcedon focused on understanding the inner life of God the Son. In other words, what is the relationship between Jesus' humanity and his divinity? In the year 451, the 350 bishops attending the Council of Chalcedon



Theotokos

A Greek title for Mary meaning “God bearer.”



Eucharist, the

Also called the Mass or Lord's Supper, and based on a word for "thanksgiving," it is the central Christian liturgical celebration, established by Jesus at the Last Supper. In the Eucharist, the sacrificial Death and Resurrection of Jesus are both remembered and renewed. The term sometimes refers specifically to the consecrated bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Christ.

solemnities

Important holy days in the Catholic liturgical calendar, such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and All Saints' Day.

Last Judgment

The judgment of the human race by Jesus Christ at his Second Coming. It is also called the Final Judgment.

declared that Jesus' two natures (his human nature and his divine nature) are undivided and inseparable. Jesus is fully man and fully God. He is not half man and half God; nor is he two Persons somehow pushed into one. Jesus, God the Son, is *one* Divine Person with *two* natures. The Council of Chalcedon concluded that Jesus is of the same substance as God the Father when it comes to his divinity, and that he is of the same substance as us when it comes to his humanity.

In what ways do you respond to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your own life?

Article 9: The Nicene Creed

You've probably studied the Declaration of Independence in one or more of your classes so far. Part of it sums up what people in the British colonies of North America believed in 1776 about their rights. In a similar way, a creed is a summary statement of the beliefs of an individual or a community. The creed Catholics pray most frequently is the Nicene Creed. The formal name for this creed is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. It is the product of two Ecumenical Councils—the Council of Nicaea held in AD 325 and the Council of Constantinople in AD 381, the latter at which it was promulgated.

Proclaiming Shared Beliefs

Catholics pray the Nicene Creed at Sunday celebrations of the **Eucharist** as well as at **solemnities**, Baptisms, and other special liturgical celebrations. This recitation of the Creed during a liturgy is called the Profession of Faith. Praying the Creed together in this way allows the gathered assembly to "respond to the word of God proclaimed in the readings taken from Sacred Scripture and explained in the homily and that they may also call to mind and confess the great mysteries of the faith" (*General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, 67). It also underscores our unity as one community of faith. We can

help and support one another in our efforts to be faithful to the truths we profess together. Moreover, because we belong to a global Church, we are united in faith, through the Creed, with Catholics throughout the world.

The Creed and Baptism

From the early centuries of the Church, the Creed has played an important role in the liturgy of Baptism. Because Baptism is the Sacrament by which one becomes a Christian, it was important for the people being baptized to know and profess the beliefs of the community they were joining. Most Catholics today are baptized as babies, so our parents and godparents promise to raise us according to the faith of the Church as stated in the Creed. Thus praying the Creed each Sunday is a way for us to dedicate ourselves again to the Catholic faith. We renew our commitment to the promises made by us, or by others on our behalf, at our Baptism.



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Key Concepts in the Nicene Creed

Even if you are familiar with the Nicene Creed, take the opportunity to read it carefully now and find where it expresses these key doctrines of our faith:

- The Creed expresses a Trinitarian faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- The Creed identifies Jesus' birth, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension as key events in our salvation.
- The Creed states the four "Marks" or characteristics of the Church: the Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.
- The Creed affirms belief in the resurrection of the dead and in the **Last Judgment**.

When we pray the Nicene Creed, we renew our baptismal promises. Read the Creed. Identify what it states about the three Divine Persons of the Trinity and the Church.

Using your own words, how would you say the Nicene Creed expresses the essential truths of the Catholic Church?

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and
invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus
Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of
God,
born of the Father before all
ages.

God from God, Light from
Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consub-
stantial with the Father;
through him all things were
made.

For us men and for our
salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was
incarnate of the Virgin
Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was
buried,
and rose again on the third
day

in accordance with the
Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand
of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the
dead
and his kingdom will have no
end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father
and the Son,
who with the Father and
the Son is adored and
glorified,
who has spoken through the
prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic
and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the
forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the res-
urrection of the dead
and the life of the world to
come.

Amen.

Article 10: The Trinity: Model for Human Relationships

What does the Trinity have to do with you? For many Catholics the Trinity can seem like an incomprehensible mystery, a distant reality, or an abstract theory. In fact, the Trinity isn't unrelated to our human experience. The Catechism tells us that "there is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons" (1890) and the kind of relationships we should have with one another.

What is this "certain resemblance"? How should our human relationships reflect what we see in the Trinity? The Trinity is a dynamic communion of Persons who dwell together in love and unity. They never cease to reach out with grace, compassion, and mercy to all humanity. Our Triune God is not distant from us, unconcerned with our joys and struggles; rather, our God is involved in human history. Our God is so involved, in



Faith in Action

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity

Elizabeth Catez (1880–1906) was born in France. She was the firstborn in her family, and from a young age was known for her terrible temper. After receiving her First Holy Communion, she seemed to be better able to control herself. She grew in her life with God, and developed a special understanding of the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

As a teenager, Elizabeth visited the sick and sang in the parish choir. She taught catechism to the children working in factories. At the age of twenty-one, after declining several offers of marriage, she entered the Carmelite convent in Dijon, France. During her religious life, she wrote about her experiences of God, both in times of light and joy and in times of darkness. She became a spiritual director to many people, helping them to find God along their own paths in life. Her writings were published and have helped to guide others to a deeper knowledge and love of God who is Trinity.

When she died at age twenty-six of Addison's disease (a painful hormone disorder which at that time had no treatment), her last words were, "I am going to Light, to Love, to Life!" She had no doubt that the Holy Trinity she had come to know in her heart during her lifetime would welcome her into the fullness of life in Heaven.

fact, that he became part of human history through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

This is the God in whose image we are created, and this is the God with whom we are destined to live forever in Heaven. While we live on earth, we are to live like this God—in relationship with others, not in isolation. Through conversation, service, and one-on-one interaction, we grow as people, discover our gifts and talents, and learn to live in the way God wants us to live. In this way, the Trinity, as a communion of Divine Persons, gives us a foundation for relationships built on unity, truth, and love.

How can you use the Trinity as a model for your own relationships?

- You can be involved in the lives of your family members, even when it is inconvenient.
- You can reach out to a new student at your school.
- You can enlarge your circle of friends and acquaintances to include people that others may have overlooked or excluded.
- You can take on a new role or ministry in your parish community.

God created us to live as a part of a community, supporting, serving, and loving one another. How do you support, serve, and love those in the communities of your family, school, church, and city?



Can you think of other ways?

When we live out our call to community in these and other ways, we are truly following God's plan for humanity. That plan is revealed for us in the mystery of the Holy Trinity: three Divine Persons living forever in unity and love as one.

What words come to mind when you think of the word *relationship*?

For Review

1. What difficult tasks did the early Church face in safeguarding the apostolic faith?
2. What were the two main types of heresies about Jesus in the early Church?
3. Why do we use the title Mother of God to refer to Mary?
4. What did the Council of Nicaea declare about Jesus? What belief about Jesus was the Council defending?
5. What did the Council of Chalcedon affirm about the relationship of the human and divine natures in Jesus?
6. Why do Catholics pray the Nicene Creed at liturgical celebrations?
7. What are some of the key doctrines of the Catholic faith that the Nicene Creed states?
8. In what ways can the Trinity be a model for human relationships?