

Catechism Course Clondalkin 2021

#3 God as Trinity

Belief in the Trinity is foundational for our faith: from this belief flows everything else we believe.

We cannot know God as Trinity by using reason: it was necessary for God to reveal this. The Trinity is a mystery: it cannot be fully comprehended.

God Revealed in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament God revealed himself as one God.

He reveals his name: YHWH ('I AM WHO AM')

He is Truth and Love.

There are hints of God as Trinity in the Old Testament (eg, Genesis 18)

God Revealed in the New Testament

In the New Testament God reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

Jesus reveals himself as the unique Son of God the Father; also, that when he leaves the apostles he will send the Holy Spirit.

Since its beginning, the Church baptises in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as commanded by Jesus (Mt 28:18-20).

How are we to understand the Trinity?

--The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons.

The term "**substance**" (or "essence" or "nature") is the term used to designate the divine being in its unity, while the term "**person**" to designate the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the real distinction among them.

---The divine persons are really distinct from one another. "Father", "Son", "Holy Spirit" are not simply names designating different ways that God can appear.

---The real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: the Father is related to the Son as Father, this Fatherhood is what distinguishes him as a person of the Trinity.

--(Each of the persons of the Trinity have always existed; eg in the Creed we say that Jesus is *eternally* begotten of the Father)

The Trinity at work in our lives.

The end/destination of man is to enter into communion with the Trinity.

Therefore, the Father send the Son to redeem fallen man so that we might enter into communion with God. The Son and Father then send the Holy Spirit to guide the Church.

Although creation is attributed to the Father, Redemption to the Son, and Sanctification to the Holy Spirit, all three Persons of the Trinity act as one and are fully present in all the missions of the Trinity.

Further Resources:

Catechism, paragraphs 199-167

Jean Danielou's excellent book '*God's Life in Us*'