

God the Father and God the Son carries the fullness of the Divine Being with Him. He is God the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, and He, too, is the “Supreme All-Everything.” In order for the Son to receive the fullness of the Love of the Father, what is received must be God as well — for it has already been revealed that God is Love. Here we can again see a different aspect of the analogy of the marital embrace. When husband and wife come together, they become a gift of love for each other and this exchange of love sometimes bears the fruit of a child. In God, this eternal exchange of Love is eternally fruitful and is called God the Holy Spirit.

### God as Father

There are two understandings of God revealed to us in consideration of Him as Father. The first and more obvious one is that all creation came from Him. This was the Jewish understanding of God as Father. We can again touch on the marital embrace to shed light on the relationship between God and His creation. God is akin to the husband in this analogy and the wife is akin to creation. In the marital act, the seed for procreation of the child issues forth from the husband and the wife receives this gift. This is similar to God the Father. He issues forth the “seed” of all creation, but the universe can only receive this “seed” as a gift from God; it cannot bring itself into being, just as the wife cannot bring forth life without the gift from the husband.

The other understanding concerns the life and relationships within the Trinity. A proper understanding of the three Persons of the Trinity is that all of them possess the Eternal Infinite Nature of God and have always existed. For us who have only experienced time, we can only get a glimpse of what Eternity is like. It stands outside the bounds of time. Eternity has no past and no future.

So God the Father is eternal; God the Son is co-eternal with the Father, as is God the Holy Spirit. However, the relationship within the Trinity is one of generation and procession. God the Father is the Origin of the Divine Nature; and since the essence of the Divine Nature is Love, God the Father must eternally generate or beget another Person with a Divine Nature to give and receive His Love. He did not have a choice to “beget or not to beget,” since the essence of love is to give itself fully and fruitfully. Therefore, the Son possesses the Eternal Infinite Nature of God from the Father via generation. The Father, however, possesses the Eternal Infinite Nature in an ungenerated way. Yet both the Father and the Son fully possess the same Divine Nature of God. It can also be stated that the Son is generated from the mind of the Father. The Holy Spirit, however, receives

His Eternal Infinite Nature from the eternal exchange of Love between the Father and the Son, and thus the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. So all generation and procession within the Trinity also originates from the Father.

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### Prayer of consecration to Jesus

God our Father, I believe that you created me out of love. In a thousand ways I have sinned against you. I repent of all of my sins. Please forgive me.

Thank you for sending your Son to die for me, to save me from hell. I choose this day to renew my covenant with you and to place Jesus at the center of my heart. I surrender to Him as Lord over my whole life.

I ask you now to flood my heart and soul with your Holy Spirit and to grant me the gift of new life. Give me the grace and courage to live as a missionary disciple for the rest of my days. Amen.

# The Holy Trinity

## Mystery of Mysteries



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## The Trinity

Of the many uniquely Christian beliefs about the One God, the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) stands out as one of the most mysterious. It is also the most fundamental and most central. When Catholics speak about mystery in reference to God it does not mean that nothing can be known about Him. It is quite the opposite: plenty can be and is known about God, but we will never be able to completely understand Him and His ways. We do not know about the Innermost Mystery of God, the Trinity, through human reason; rather, the only way we know about this is because He directly reveals this to us in Scripture and Apostolic Tradition (see tract, “Petrine Primacy and the Authority of Popes”). However, because of the Nature of God, the limitations of human understanding, and the shortcomings of human language, the discussion of the attributes of the Trinity can only give us an imperfect understanding of what there is to know about the Infinite God.

## About the Attributes of God

When we speak about attributes of God, it is helpful for us to understand that, unlike created rational beings (angelic and human beings with the ability to use reason), God does not merely possess that attribute, but He is that attribute and is the source of that attribute in all of creation. So we cannot accurately say that God is intelligent; rather, the way to describe Him would be to say He is Intelligence or Intellect Itself and the source of all created intellect. The same is true for love; God is Love (cf. 1 John 4:8) and the source of all love in created rational beings. Some other attributes of God are that He is All-Knowing, or Knowledge Itself, Truth Itself, and All-Powerful. This includes the Knowledge and Truth about Himself and the Power to bring about all that does not deny His Nature and is not self-contradictory (like a square circle). It is also important to realize that there is no division in God either; so when we say God is Love, Intellect, or Knowledge, He is fully all of these. He is not fifty percent Love and thirty percent Intellect and twenty percent Knowledge or anything less than one hundred percent of every attribute used to describe Him.

## The Nature of Love

There are many ideas about love and of what it consists, but for our discussion we must speak about the giving nature of love. In order for love to be love in the full sense, it must be given *fully and fruitfully*; therefore a person must have another like himself in order to be able to love. We have an example of this in the story of creation: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for

him.’ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’ (Gen 2:18–23).

Adam is shown many creatures, but none is found suitable for him. Then God shows him woman and you can sense Adam’s joy as he cries out, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” What he is saying is, “Finally I have someone who is like me, to whom I can give myself fully — someone I can truly love!” For Adam, this was not possible with the animals; there can be no intimate conversation with a bird or any non-rational being because this requires the ability to receive and understand what is being said and the ability to communicate back to the one communicating. The bird simply does not have the ability to comprehend human thought, speech, meaning, etc.

It is the same with God in relation to creation. No created being or creature can ever receive the full expression of God’s Love, because in order to receive the Infinite Love from the Eternal God, there would need to be One Who could infinitely and eternally receive that Love. Scripture tells us that one of the central attributes of God is Love. So by definition God the Father, in order to be able to communicate the fullness of His Divine Love to Another, must relate to another Divine Person Who can receive and return His Divine Communication of Love. This brings us to the Second Person of the Trinity.

## The Perfect Idea

In the human intellect an idea, no matter how well thought out, is always imperfect. A human idea is our attempt to conceive of an object or a concept in our mind. For example, an architect can conceive of a beautiful church and in his mind start to build and add detail to the idea of that church. However, no matter how intelligent the architect is, he cannot perfectly conceive and hold together every single detail required to build that church in his mind. This is not true, though, of God because He is Intellect and Knowledge, and thus has a

perfect Knowledge of Himself, and thus this perfect Idea of Himself contains all that is God.

So, God the Father is All-Knowing, and this perfect Knowledge includes Knowledge of Himself. So he has an Idea about Himself that is perfect; and since God is also All-Powerful, He is able to “beget” the reality of a Son. The only way this Son could be the Son of the Father is if He possessed all of the attributes of the Father; and the only way this can be true is if the Son is God as well. The Son is the Second Person of the Trinity.

One possible analogy we might offer to help understand this Divine “event” is to blend the concept of the human generation of a child through the marital embrace with the concept of cloning (the copying and growing of a fully adult creature). God the Father is pure Spirit and thus has no physical parts, so when He generates a Son from the Divine Idea of Himself this more resembles cloning than the marital embrace. However, it is like the human generation of a son in that the Son receives His Divine Nature from the Father as a human son receives his nature from his parents. (Human parents beget human children, with human natures — not puppies or kittens.) God the Father eternally generates God the Son Who possesses all that the Father has, including the Divine Eternal Nature; so God the Son is a true Son and true God. This Divine Generation of the Son is like both human procreation and cloning in that God the Son is a Person distinct from the Father, just as a human person is a person distinct from his parents or his clone. The distinct Person of the Son, however, fully possesses the same Divine Nature of the Father in a way analogous to how a human person — though distinct from his parents in personhood — nevertheless shares with them a common human nature.

So the Son is in full possession of the Divine Intellect, Love, Power, Presence, etc. God the Son along with God the Father is the “Supreme All-Everything.” If God the Son did not possess all that the Father possesses, then the Son would be unable to be Loved fully and fruitfully by the Father. The Son would not be God. Indeed, if the Son lacked the *fullness* of any of the attributes of God, He could not be God.

## The Spirit of Love

God the Holy Spirit exists in a different manner. Whereas the Son is eternally generated in the “mind” of God the Father, the Holy Spirit is the impulse of Love flowing from the Father to the Son and from the Son back to the Father. The Love of the Father is poured into the Divine Idea that is the Son and the Son eternally gives the Love He receives from the Father back to the Father. The Love of God that flows between

