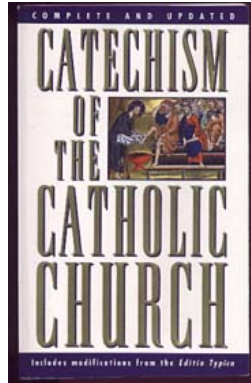


## Theology for Beginners – The Holy Trinity

### The Holy Trinity - CCC # 232-267

Now that we better understand creation, souls and spirits it is appropriate to undertake the subject of the Trinity. This is the greatest mystery of all where **one plus one plus one** still equals one. God is the living God with three distinct persons in yet one God. All three persons existed at the same time from the beginning. Beginning in the Old Testament we can see the Trinity foreshadowed many times. Genesis uses the term “us” and we see that the spirit came over the land. Since all possess divine nature they do not share it. It is not simply divided up between them since there is no separation.



### Three persons in one

The term **Appropriation** is sometimes used to help in our understanding of the Trinity. That is, we see in the Gospels where certain divine functions are appropriated to one person of the Trinity. Listen to the words in the Nicene Creed. It says: The Father is the Creator. The Son is the Redeemer. The Holy Spirit is the giver of life. If all 3 persons create, why is the Father called the Creator? The theological term that helps resolve this paradox is called appropriation. Therefore, appropriation helps us see that the 3 persons are truly distinct and have a personal characteristic – said in another way:

- ✠ The **Father** is Origin or Creation
- ✠ The **Son** proceeds by Knowledge or The Word
- ✠ The **Holy Spirit** proceeds by the way of Love and giver of life

### The doctrine of Trinity

There are four important doctrinal elements about the Trinity:

1. There are three persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
2. Each person is completely Himself.
3. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God.
4. There are not three Gods – there is one God.

The Gospels tell us that the Father has a Son. This is not unlike a family where a father (and mother) has a son. There may be profound similarities and likeness of the family son to his father but the son is still unique. The son may be quite similar in nature to his father – but not completely the same. Also in the Gospels, Our Lord tells us there is a third person – the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells His apostles that He will send the Paraclete – the Holy Spirit - to them who will teach them things.

We can illustrate this mystery in a special way – imperfect as it is. In a similar way, men and women who are parents can illustrate the mystery of the Trinity. To be born – all men and women are firstly sons or daughters of their father (and mother). As parents they become father (and mother) of their children (sons or daughters) by giving them life. Therefore – in a special way a man is all at once - a son, a father and a giver of life. Like the Trinity - each appropriation is different. The Virgin Mary illustrates this best in that Mary was the daughter of the **Father**, mother of the **Son** and spouse of the **Holy Spirit**.

Finally, there is a story about the young seminarian student in a class to study the Trinity that best defines the mystery of the Trinity. After several weeks of teaching and discussions, the young seminarian raises his hand and exclaims that that he now fully understands the Trinity. The teacher looking at him frowns and says, “You have just failed the course”.