

Trinity

The story is told of St Augustine of Hippo, a great philosopher and theologian. He was preoccupied with the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. He wanted so much to understand the doctrine of one God in three persons and to be able to explain it logically. One day he was walking along the sea shore and reflecting on this matter. Suddenly, he saw a little child all alone on the shore. The child made a hole in the sand, ran to the sea with a little cup, filled her cup with sea water, ran up and emptied the cup into the hole she had made in the sand. Back and forth she went to the sea, filled her cup and came and poured it into the hole. Augustine drew up and said to her, "Little child, what are you doing?"

She replied, "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole."

"How do you think," Augustine asked her, "that you can empty this immense sea into this tiny hole and with this tiny cup?"

She answered back, "And you, how do you suppose that with your small head you can comprehend the immensity of God?" With that the child disappeared.

The doctrine of the inner relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in such a way that each of them is fully and equally God, yet there are not three Gods but one, cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind. It is a mystery.

TRINITY .

I. What is the "Trinity?"

A. *It is what distinguishes Christians from all other religions.¹*

B. *Judaism and Islam are the other great monotheistic religions, but both reject the divinity of Jesus and therefore the Trinity.²*

C. *The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion—in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another.*

D. *In the words of the Athanasian Creed: "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God."*

II. Scriptural "issues" for the Trinity (Old Testament vs. New Testament) **One God**

A. *Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai (Yehova) Eloheinu Adonai Ehad (achad)- Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One (שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד) the "Shema"*

B. *The word **Elohim** occurs more than 2500 times in the Hebrew Bible, with meanings ranging from "god" in a general sense (as in Exodus 12:12, where it describes "the gods of Egypt"), to a specific god (e.g., 1 Kings 11:33, where it describes Chemosh "the god of Moab"), or the frequent references to Yahweh as the "elohim" of Israel), to demons, seraphim, and other supernatural beings, to the spirits of the dead brought up at the behest of King Saul in 1 Samuel 28:13, and even to kings and prophets (e.g., Exodus 4:16)*

¹ Factoid": the Orthodox Christians in the Middle East always say in Arabic: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ONE GOD!" (in Arabic: "Bismilabi wal-ibni war-ruhi-l- quddus, ALLAH WAHID!").

² Islam reveres Jesus. In the Qur'an, the Virgin Mary is reference more times than in the New Testament.

C. Hebrew references to Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) is a grammatically singular **or** plural noun for "god" or "gods" in both modern and ancient Hebrew language.

D. In Hebrew the ending -im, mainly indicates a masculine plural. However with Elohim the construction is grammatically singular, (i.e. it governs a singular verb or adjective) when referring to the Hebrew God, but grammatically plural elohim (i.e. taking a plural verb or adjective) when used of pagan divinities (Psalms 96:5; 97:7)

E. In the Hebrew Bible Elohim, when meaning the God of Israel, is mostly grammatically singular. Even in Genesis 1:26 "Then God said (singular verb), 'Let us make (plural verb) man in our image, after our likeness'." Elohim is singular.

F. The Gospel of Mark (12:29-30) mentions that Jesus considered the beginning exhortation of the Shema to be the first of his two greatest commandments: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

G. The apostle Paul reworks the Shema in 1 Corinthians 8:6 vis-à-vis the risen Christ: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

III. How did it become a doctrine of the Church

A. *Initially, steeped in controversy because of the debate of the divinity of Jesus.*

1. *The doctrine of the Trinity is part of Sacred Tradition. The doctrine was clarified and taught by several of the early Church councils. –*

2. *First Council of Nicaea (AD 325)—adopted the original Nicene Creed to explain that Jesus is truly God –*

3. *First Council of Constantinople (AD 381)—revised the Nicene Creed to assert the Holy Spirit's divinity and place in the Trinity. This Creed is the one we know today.*

4. *Council of Ephesus (AD 431)—reaffirmed the Nicene Creed's teaching that Jesus Christ is both human and divine in one nature.*

5. *Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)—reasserted the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity.*

B. *The debate on the divinity of Jesus: Key to Trinity (The origin of the Creed)*

1. *HISTORY OF THE DEBATE: In the 4th century AD a priest named Arius ("Arianism Heresy") was an influential theologian in the church at Alexandria, Egypt. He argued that Sacred Scripture make God the Son less than God the Father: the Arian heresy was that Jesus was a man who was later made divine but was not begotten by God as fully man and fully God.*

2. *It was decided that it was not enough to condemn the heresy of Arius but that it was necessary to define the Church's position with*

reference to the controversy by means of a clear-cut statement of the Catholic faith in the Divinity of Christ. It was decided that the term Greek term **homoousios**, which means "of the same essence or substance" (Latin = **consubstantialis**) was the word needed to profess the essential unity of the Father and the Son. (English "Consubstantial") After four weeks of deliberation the bishop delegates and the Pope's representatives, working with the leadership of St. Athanasius, had drawn up a creed. In 325 AD a document professing the creed of belief of the Universal (Catholic) Church was signed by all the bishops except for two. This creed has been known ever since as the Nicene Creed:

3. The Creed: "We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible; and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten as the only-begotten of the Father, this is, from the essence (ousia) of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not created, consubstantial (homo-ousios) with the Father, through Whom all things were made, both in heaven and earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was Incarnate, was made Man; Who suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and shall come again to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit. But to those who say, 'There was a time when He was not, and before he was begotten He was not, and He came into existence out of what was not'; or who say, 'He is of a different nature and essence from

the Father,' or 'the Son of God is created or capable of change,' let them be anathema.”

4. Revised version prayed at Mass today and it still addresses the Arian Heresy.

IV. What are the natures of the Trinity?

A. Love

B. Creativity

V. Popular images of the Trinity use in teaching

A. Water, Ice and Steam

B. The shamrock

C. The egg

D. The family (see below)

VI. Trinity in nature (do you believe in coincidence?)

A. Family: Dr Scott Hahn gives an example of the Trinity in his book "Rome Sweet Home" and that is when new Life is conceived, when a husband and wife or a male and female become "One flesh" they can with the grace of God become three flesh, that is, a new child is conceived. God, who is the Inventor of all creatures and who has the power to simply "Imagine" all creatures into existence has in His goodness allowed humans to share in His creation of new Life. He has made His creation of New Life an image of Himself. Dr Hahn says that it is as if the Love between the two parents becomes the third (the child). The Trinity itself is a family of "Three" who are One.

B. Light: God's first words in the Bible are "Let there be Light" (Genesis 1: 3) and also Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (See John 8: 12). So it is very appropriate that the Visible Light or White Light which we get from the Sun is made of three basic colors: Red, Green and Blue. Scientists call them the "Primary colors of Light". All colors of light that are visible to Human eyes are made from one or more of these three colors. These three colors are the basic building "blocks" of our visible colors and these three colors alone form the seven different colors of the Rainbow. Equal amounts of these three produce White Light.

C. Solar system: The largest example is in our Solar system. Scientists say that three astronomical bodies (a star, a planet and a moon) are necessary for Life on Earth. They are the Sun, the Earth and the Moon. (Planets revolve around Stars or Suns and Moons revolve around Planets). In unique ways these three bodies are similar to the Trinity.

D. Fire: Fire needs three things in order to survive or exist. It needs Heat, Fuel and Oxygen. (Actually we humans also physically need these Three things, we need the heat we get from the Sun, the fuel or Food we get from the Earth and we need the Oxygen we breathe which we get from the atmosphere (which itself is produced by the Moon.) God appeared in the form of Fire many times in the Bible, to Moses He appeared as the Fire in the Burning Bush without actually burning the Bush, again with Moses He appeared as the Pillar of Fire (Exodus 13 ; 21–22) guarding the People of Israel. In Exodus (19; 18) "Mount Sinai was entirely wrapped in smoke because Yahweh had descended on it in the form of

Fire" and later when God appeared again to Moses on Mount Sinai, "To the watching Israelites the Glory of Yahweh looked like a devouring fire on the Mountain top" (Exodus 24; 18). In the New Testament we see that God the Holy Spirit descended on Mary and the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday in the form of "Tongues of Fire" (Acts of the Apostles 2; 3–4). The Seraphim Angels are closest Angels to the Throne of God in Heaven and their name means "Burning ones" because the Throne of God is ablaze with His Glory.

*E. Water: Water is vital for our Life on earth. Water molecules (H₂O) are made of two Hydrogen atoms and one Oxygen atom. Physically one Hydrogen atom is bonded to one side of an Oxygen atom and another is bonded to the other side. They look something like this: H-O-H. This can remind us of the Trinity, where the Oxygen can represent the Holy Spirit between the Father and the Son who are each represented by the two Hydrogen atoms. Representing the Holy Spirit by Oxygen seems very appropriate because the word "Spirit" comes from the Latin word "Spiritus" which means "Breath" and as we know it is the Oxygen in the "Atmosphere" which we need to breathe in order to live. It is also appropriate because Theologians say that the Holy Spirit is the "Atmosphere" of Love eternally produced between the Father and the Son. One other reason it is very appropriate is that when the Holy Spirit appeared on Pentecost Sunday to Mary the Mother of Jesus with the Apostles there was the sound of "a mighty wind" and He appeared to them as "Tongues of Fire". There is only one Greek word "**Ruah**" for "wind" and "spirit". We know also that a fire needs Oxygen to remain burning. We need the breath of the Holy Spirit to be on Fire with the Love*

of God. Water at 0.16 Centigrade has a special quality called a "**Triple Point**" whereby it can exist as three things at the one time, liquid water, solid ice and water vapor, this is like the Trinity who coexist as three Persons but are one God. It is very appropriate that Water should reflect the Trinity because Jesus uses water in the Sacrament of Baptism to confer Divine Life on us His creatures. In Scripture there are references to God as "Water" for example Jesus told the woman at the well that He was the "Living Water" welling up to Eternal Life.

F. Atoms: The Trinity also marks the material substance of Creation. Material substances of Creation are made of atoms, and all atoms are made of three basic particles, Protons, Neutrons and Electrons. These are the three particles that are the building blocks of all physical substances. (Protons have a positive charge, electrons are negative and neutrons are neutral.)

VII. Church Fathers Commentary

A. "All those Catholic expounders of the divine Scriptures, both Old and New, whom I have been able to read, who have written before me concerning the Trinity, Who is God, have purposed to teach, according to the Scriptures, this doctrine, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit intimate a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality; and therefore that they are not three Gods, but one God: although the Father hath begotten the Son, and so He who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and so He who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, Himself also co-equal with the Father and the Son, and pertaining to the unity of the Trinity.

Yet not that this Trinity was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, buried and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, but only the Son. Nor, again, that this Trinity descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus when He was baptized; nor that, on the day of Pentecost, after the ascension of the Lord, when there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,' the same Trinity sat upon each of them with cloven tongues like as of fire,' but only the Holy Spirit. Nor yet that this Trinity said from heaven, Thou art my Son,' whether when He was baptized by John, or when the three disciples were with Him in the mount, or when the voice sounded, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again;' but that it was a word of the Father only, spoken to the Son; although the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as they are indivisible, so work indivisibly. This is also my faith, since it is the Catholic faith." Augustine, On the Trinity, I:4,7 (A.D. 416)

VIII. *Scriptural Evidence of the Trinity*

A. *Because the nature of the Holy Trinity is so difficult to understand God choose to reveal His Trinitarian nature to Man gradually.*

B. *In the Old Testament the first hint of God as a Trinity is in the book of Genesis, chapter 1, the story of creation. Here the Father is referred to as "God", the Son is referred to in each phrase "God Said" because the Son is also known as the "Word of God" (see St John's gospel 1: 1-3) and it was by "speaking" that God created (see also Psalm 33: "He spoke: and it came to be") and the Holy Spirit is referred to in the phrase "and the spirit of God moved over the waters."*

- C. *In Genesis (1: 26) God says "Let **us** make man in our own image, in the likeness of **ourselves**" which seems to point to God's Trinitarian nature because otherwise God would have possibly said "I will make man in my image".*
- D. *Again God said after the fall "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever," (Gen 3; 22).*
- E. *In chapter 11 of Genesis says "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech," (Gen 11; 7)*
- F. *The next hint of God's Trinitarian nature is in chapter 18 of Genesis, verses 1-2: "God appeared to Abraham - he (Abraham) looked up and saw **three men standing nearby**". Further on in the Old Testament there is the above already mentioned quote from Isaiah Chapter 9, which seems to name the Trinity as one "mighty" God and also as the three divine persons.*
- G. *NEW TESTAMENT: The first clear mention of the Trinity is in the New Testament and is appropriately to Mary when the Archangel Gabriel asked her to become the Mother of the Son of God (Luke 1: 35). He said to her "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High (the Father) will overshadow you: so the child to be born of you will be called holy, the Son of God".*
- H. *The next revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament is at the Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan by John the Baptist (See Mark1: 10-11) where the "Heavens opened and the Spirit descending on Him (The Son) like a Dove: and a voice came from Heaven (The Father) saying, "You are My Beloved Son".*

I. *Transfiguration: Continued "Son-ship" of Jesus.*

J. *In St John's Gospel, especially chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17 Jesus speaks a lot about the relationships between the Father, Himself (the Son) and the Holy Spirit. He tells Philip (John 14: 9) "He who has seen Me has seen the Father", earlier in (John 10: 30) He said "The Father and I are one". In order to show us that all the Three Persons of the Trinity are equal to each other He said in (John 16: 15) "All that the Father has is mine: therefore I said that He (the Holy Spirit) will take what is mine and declare it to you". The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both the Father and of the Son and He was equally sent by both the Father and the Son (See John (14: 16) "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counsellor (the Holy Spirit) to be with you forever" and John 15: 26) "when the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth.") Jesus is showing that both the Father and the Son would send the Holy Spirit because He is the Spirit equally of both of them. Before Jesus ascended back to Heaven He clearly named the Trinity when He told His disciples (Mathew 28: 19) "Go make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". By Baptism we receive the Holy Spirit and are born again. We are made Sisters and Brothers of Jesus and therefore we are made Children of God.*

IX. *Nature of Trinity:*

A. *God has a Divine Nature, which is beyond all human understanding, but Theologians try to explain the nature of the Trinity in this way. God has Free will, Self Knowledge and Infinite Love. The Eternal Father who we call the first Person*

of the Trinity seems to act like the Free will of the Trinity even though each Person of the Trinity has equal Free will. He seems to ratify the decisions. In the Our Father prayer we say "Thy will be done" and Jesus made it clear that He was sent by the Father and that He came to do the will of the Father. God has perfect infinite Knowledge of Himself and all His Goodness and this knowledge is so profound that it is the second Divine Person of the Trinity who we call the Son of God. See (Mt 11: 27) where Jesus said, "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son,". The Son of God is the Father's Eternal Self Knowledge or to put it another way, He is the Father's only Divine "Fruit" and that fruit is the Knowledge God has of His own Goodness. The Son of God is the Divine "Fruit of the knowledge of Good (and evil)." Compare with Gen 2: 9). There is no evil in God of course but God still knows the nature of evil but He cannot do anything evil because His nature is Infinite Goodness. The evil that God knows is in His creatures, (evil spirits or humans) that reject Him. The Son of God is God's Self Knowledge. The Son of God sees the infinite goodness, (humility, generosity, gentleness, mercy, selflessness etc.) in the Father and burns with infinite Love for Him and the Father seeing the perfect knowledge of His own goodness in the Son burns with the same infinite love for the Son and that infinite fire of "Love" between the Two is so profound that it is the Third Divine Person of the Trinity Who is called the Holy Spirit. Theologians say that the Holy Spirit is the atmosphere of Love eternally produced between the Father and the Son.

B. God is Love: Venerable Louise Margaret Claret de la Touche had profound revelations about the Trinity and she explained that God is the Trinity because God is Love. By its nature Love must travel from one person to another so in God there has to be a second Person who is the object of God's Love and that is the Son of God and the Infinite Love between the Father and the Son is the Third Person whom we call the Holy Spirit.

C. Relation of the Three Persons: The Father's "Self Knowledge" is the person of the Son. God has made man in the "Image of God" so by looking at human nature we can learn more about God. Imagine then if one person had perfect knowledge of another person. In order to have perfect knowledge of another person they would in a sense have had to try and be the other person, they would have to have been with the other person all of that person's life, and not only that, they would have to have been inside of them so as to know every thought they ever had, everything they ever felt and every decision they ever made. We see then that the more we know another person the more we can become a copy of that person. Psychiatrists and Counsellors get to know their patients as much as possible in order to try in a sense to be their patient, and then they are better able to see their patient's problems from their point of view. Knowledge of someone helps us to become like a copy of them. The Father has always "Known" Himself, He has always had perfect infinite Knowledge of Himself and that Knowledge of Himself is His Son Who is the perfect Copy or image of God.

D. *God's Love for us: One of the most amazing things Jesus ever said is "As the Father has Loved me, so have I Loved you" (John 15; 9). The reason is because we know the Father has Infinite love for the Son which means that Jesus has Infinite love for every Human Being that has ever existed. As well, because the Father and Jesus are "One" we know then that the Father too has this same Infinite love for us and that this Infinite love is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also God's Spirit of Mercy. (Unfortunately this Love between the Father and us is nearly all one way, mainly from Him to us. But the more we have Jesus in our heart then the more we with Jesus will return this Love to the Father. Jesus is "the Way" to Love God and we follow that Way best by accepting the crosses we meet in our lives.)*

E. *The Trinity's plan for the Salvation of Mankind: We know that the first man "Adam" (the son of God) caused the fall and death of all Mankind when he received and ate the "fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and then that fruit became part of his human body or nature. But even before Adam sinned the Holy Trinity had already planned a similar but opposite pattern to save mankind and reverse the fall. That plan was to send Jesus the New Adam the Eternal Son of God down to Earth to save us. He took a human body into His own Divine Nature so that He who is the Divine "Fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" would be nailed to die on the dead tree of the Cross. By doing that He gave Eternal Life to all Mankind. To put that another way, the first man received the "fruit" and caused the "fall" then later the (Divine) Fruit" received a "Man" and caused the "Redemption". The Second person of the Trinity is also called "The*

Eternal Wisdom" of God because the word "Wisdom" means "knowledge of goodness". He is the Eternal Knowledge of God's goodness. After the Son of God redeemed mankind the Holy Trinity sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday to dwell in the heart of men so that mankind could become the Children of God.

F. The Three Persons: The fact that God is three persons but only One God, and that each of these three persons is the One God is impossible for humans to understand, and there is no example in Nature that could ever exactly show this situation because nothing in Nature is three things and one thing at the same time. Human beings though resemble God more than any other creature because scripture says that God created man "in His own image" (Gen 1:3) so in order to understand the nature of God the Creator better we will sometimes compare Him with "man " the creature. In the Old Testament Moses asked God to tell him His Name and God replied, "I AM WHO I AM" or simply "I AM" (see Exodus 3: 14) which the Jews then shortened to "YAHWEH" out of fear and respect for God:s Holy Name. Each Person of the Trinity bears this name of God as Jesus showed (see John 8: 28 and perhaps also at 18: 5,6 when He said "I AM HE"). Jesus applied the Divine name to Himself. The Holy Trinity is the only being who has a right to say "I AM" or "I". We can only say, "I am" or "I" because He invented us as unique individuals. God is the great "I" and each of us is just a tiny little "I". It is only because of God's stupendous Goodness and Mercy that we can each say, "I am". Mercy is when you give something good that is not deserved and Justice is when it is something good or bad which is deserved fair

and square, but when we think about God's goodness to us in this life and then hopefully eternal bliss in the next, we realise that God's nature is Mercy. We exist only because God exists and He gave us the stupendous gift of existence whereas God Himself is the source of all Existence. We deserve nothing in this life and nothing in the next life from God. He is the Eternal "I AM" or the Eternal "Present". All time, Past, Present and Future exists in Him. When one of the Three persons of the Trinity says "I" that "I" they say in some way also refers to the One Trinity because the Trinity is the One undivided Being. Wherever one Person of the Trinity is all Three Persons are in some sense too.

G. The Father: As the "Our Father" prayer that Jesus taught His disciples tells us the Eternal Father dwells "in Heaven" and He seems to personify the "Free will" of the Trinity even though each of the three Persons of the Trinity must have equal free will. In the "Our Father" prayer we pray, "Thy Will be done". Jesus showed us in His Life on earth that He came to do the "Will" of the Father who sent Him. In honour of our Heavenly Father and because He has so much respect for us God gave us the gift of our "free will" which makes us capable of making choices and decisions. That gift gives us a greater sense of our own individuality but it is a terrifying gift because it gives us eternal power over the destiny of our immortal souls. The Decisions we make in life decide our Eternal destiny. The Father seems to personify the "Free will" of the Trinity so perhaps He ratifies their decisions. This may seem unfair to us until we reflect on how we ourselves make decisions. We use three things when we make decisions. We use what we know (our knowledge in our mind) , we also use what we want

(desire or love in our heart), and we use our "Free will" to make the decision. It is the same with God, the Holy Trinity makes all their "decisions" using their Infinite Knowledge (the Son), their infinite Love (the Holy Spirit) and their Infinite Free will (the Eternal Father). So every decision is really a Trinitarian joint effort. We can say, They know, They love and They decide.

H. In the "Our Father" prayer we ask the Father to make the decision to "Forgive us our trespasses". God forgives us through the merits of His Son's passion and death. The Father's "Will" for us is always motivated by His infinite Love for us, so we please Him greatly when we use our "free will" to do and accept His "WILL". He is the Father of Mercy. He agreed to give us everything we have and none of which we deserve. Our obedience to the Father should be based on Trust in His Goodness and His burning Love for us.

I. The Son of God: The Son of God is the Second Person of the Trinity and He is called the "Eternal Wisdom of God" and the "Word of God". The most incredible event in the history of the Human race happened about 2000 years ago when He took on a human nature and became the man "JESUS of Nazareth". This event is called the "Incarnation".

J. The name "Jesus" means "God saves". He became a man on earth with flesh, blood and bones like ours in order to atone for our sins and to show us how to be Human. We could never atone for our sins ourselves because even the smallest sins offend the infinite Majesty and Love of God. The Son of God is the "Wisdom of God" and that word "Wisdom" comes from a Latin word "video" which means, "to see". A "wise" person is one who in his mind can "see" or "knows"

goodness. When making a decision they can see or know the good choice. The Son of God is God's Eternal "Knowledge" of Himself and since God is the infinite "Goodness" then the Son is called the "Eternal Wisdom of God".

K. St John called Him the "Word of God" and "Word" here has much greater meaning than our human understanding of "word" but it is still connected with it. "Word" here comes from the Greek word "Locos" which can be translated as the "Mind" of God. Our human words come from our store of knowledge in our Mind and they express our thoughts, we "think" in "words". Our words allow us to communicate our "thoughts" and God's "Word" allows Him to communicate His "Thoughts". His "Thoughts" give life and existence to creatures! A persons thoughts and words comes from their store of knowledge and God's thoughts and words come from His Eternal "Knowledge " in His "Mind". The "Word of God" is called the "Mind" of God. Our mind is where we "think", "imagine" or "know" something. The "Mind" of God is where God "Thinks", "Imagines" or "Knows". God's "Word" expresses God's "Thoughts", "Imagination" and "Knowledge". If God wanted to invent and create a new object or creature, He could in one instant think or imagine or know or name the object into existence. These words, to "Think", "Imagine" and to "Know" nearly have the same meaning. To "Think" may mean to "look at in your Mind", to "Imagine" could mean to "make a visible image in your Mind" and to "Know" something might mean that you can "see it in detail in your Mind". It is perhaps more accurate to say that God "Knows" an object into existence. God's Eternal Word can "Imagine" a name for some invention and that "name" can then become a reality! All of Creation and all

creatures that exist live and exist in the "Imagination" of God! All of creation is a figment of God's imagination! Only when God has "knowledge" of a new invention can it then exist. Perhaps God mentally "names," objects into existence. Man can only name unknown objects that exist. Perhaps if God wanted to create a certain planet He could imagine the planet into existence even by simply thinking or "speaking" its name. He would have perfect knowledge of every atom He would put in it, He would love it and then He would consent with His free will to its existence, and so it would! But God is able to "know" an infinite multitude of Universes or creatures (Angels, Humans or any sort!) into existence in a split second!. Psalm 33 ;6 says "By the word of the Lord the Heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all the Stars" and later line;9 says "He spoke and it came to be". The "Word of God is alive and active" as the letter to the Hebrews, (4:12) says and He makes creatures live.

L. Our Redemption by the Son of God: When we sin we are actually rejecting God, so if we by our "free will" or decisions reject God it would be fair for God to reject us, but when two persons totally reject each other it would be fair for them to reclaim any gifts they had given each other, so as we gave God nothing we have nothing to reclaim from Him but as He has given us everything He could reclaim and destroy our very Existence for all Eternity, and that is worse than Hell. In Hell we will be justly deprived of God's presence if we have rejected Him. A Hero was needed who could suffer being rejected by God on our behalf but still survive and "rise " from the dead. Jesus the Son of God is that Hero. See the "Book of Wisdom (18: 14-24) which is a prophecy about the sending of

Jesus the "Word of God" to Earth to save mankind, "When peaceful silence lay over all and the night had run the half of her swift course, down from the Heavens from the Royal Throne leapt your all powerful Word, like a ,,,, and your Majesty engraved on the Diadem on His Head.". The " sufferings" of Jesus have atoned to God for the sins of all Mankind but we should offer our sufferings and good deeds with His "Sufferings" to the Father in atonement for our sins and the sins of the World. The best way and time to do this is at the Catholic Mass. At the Mass from the time of the "Consecration" of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus at Calvary (By the Holy Spirit through the words of the ordained priest) until the "Lamb of God" prayers we can unite our sufferings, and good deeds, through Jesus, with Jesus and in Jesus "in atonement for our sins and the sins of the World" (quote from the prayers of the "Divine Mercy" Chaplet which our Lord taught St Faustina, They are very appropriate at this part of the Mass but can be said anytime). The Holy Spirit makes our "Redemption" two thousand years ago invisibly present on the altar under the appearance of Bread and Wine. Jesus the Son of God loves us so much that He makes Himself present "Risen from the dead" in His "Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity" in Holy Communion so that we can receive Him into our heart. We can also visit Him and spend time with Him in any Catholic church where He is present in the Tabernacle.

M. Mercy and Justice: Justice is something deserved and Mercy is something good that is undeserved. Divine Justice is what we "Deserve" but Jesus the Son of God accepted Divine Justice on our behalf and so He became

our "Divine Mercy". He has obtained for us Eternal Life and every gift and grace that we of ourselves could never "Deserve" no matter what we do. Two thousand years ago Pontius Pilate gave two people what they did not deserve. To the notorious criminal "Bar-abbas" whose name ironically means "son of- the father" Pilate gave a complete Pardon, a great act of mercy, but to Jesus the real "Son of the Father" Pilate gave the greatest injustice in the history of mankind when he condemned Him to suffering and death. Jesus took the place of Barabbas so that Barabbas and every one of us could really become an eternal son or daughter of God. Barabbas symbolised each one of us and Jesus took our place and so it is He who will Judge us at the End of Time. In the parable of the Prodigal son which Jesus told (see Luke 15: 11-32) the calf which the father has killed for the feast after the return of the wayward son could be an image of Jesus who the Eternal Father allows to be sacrificed on Calvary and who is present in the Bread of Life at the Feast of the Mass for us the wayward children of God.

N. The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the "Bond of Love" between the Father and the Son. God has perfect love for Himself because He Himself is "Infinite Goodness" and He loves Himself in an infinitely unselfish way. Through all Eternity God was burning with this infinite " Love" for Himself but He wanted to share His overflowing Love and Happiness with others so He decided to invent "creatures" (mainly Angels and humans) who would be able to receive and share that love also. When doing so He decided to make them in His own image, that is, in the image of the Trinity, each of them with the abilities to know, decide and to love.

O. *The Holy Spirit and Mary: The Holy Spirit formed Jesus Who is the Head of His Church through Mary at the Annunciation and He continues to form the rest of the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus (the Church) through Mary. We should give ourselves to Jesus through Mary and she will prepare us to better receive the graces of the Holy Spirit so that Jesus will be formed much easier and more fully in our hearts. Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and so she has a greater union with Him than any other creature has. When God joins human spouses they "become one flesh" and so Mary and the Holy Spirit have to a great extent become One Spirit. Mary is a symbol of what the Church will one day be in Heaven. Like her it will be sinless and Virgin. Sinless and virgin because it will be totally purified from all sin and unfaithfulness. Mary is the human "New Eve" because she is the new "Sinless Virgin" (like Jesus) who believed and obeyed God through the "angel". Adam and Eve were sinless virgins too until they believed the serpent angel Satan and disobeyed God. Mary became the "Mediatrice of all Graces" for mankind when she obeyed God's will. Eve helped to bring sin into the human race through Adam; Mary helps to bring the Graces of the Holy Spirit into the human race through her continual prayer to her Son Jesus. He is the New Adam and the source of all the Graces which we receive from the Holy Spirit. The devil used Eve to obtain his victory of sin and so God wants us to use Mary (the New Eve) to obtain our victories by the Graces of the Holy Spirit over every sin. There is a sort of poetic justice in the pattern of Salvation. Mary is the spiritual "Mother of all the Living" and so she is the Mother*

of our souls and she wants to help form Jesus in our hearts according to the Will of God and by using the gifts of the Holy Spirit her Divine Spouse.

X.

I. Introduction to the Trinity

1. The doctrine of the Trinity is part of Sacred Tradition. The doctrine was clarified and taught by several of the early Church councils. –
2. First Council of Nicaea (AD 325)—adopted the original Nicene Creed to explain that Jesus is truly God –
3. First Council of Constantinople (AD 381)—revised the Nicene Creed to assert the Holy Spirit’s divinity and place in the Trinity. This Creed is the one we know today.
4. Council of Ephesus (AD 431)—reaffirmed the Nicene Creed’s teaching that Jesus Christ is both human and divine in one nature.
5. Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)—reasserted the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity.

II. Scriptural References

A. The concept of the Holy Trinity is also expressed in the Scriptures.

1. —Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19).
2. —The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. (2 Corinthians 13:13).

Reflection on the mystery of evil: December 2012

I write these lines within hours of hearing about the horrific shootings in Connecticut. The question on so many minds and in so many hearts is: Why?

It is an age-old question, one that believers have been asking, struggling with, raging at, and weeping over, for many centuries. Why would God allow something like this to happen? It is what theologians and saints have called the “mystery of evil.” It wondered about this in another form recently, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, when many lost their lives and homes. In this case, however, and in all cases involving children — especially the violent deaths of children — the question takes on even more poignancy and greater urgency.

*As a believer I need to say this: There is no satisfactory or adequate answer to that question. It is, to use another ancient phrase, a mystery. That word is often used as way of **avoiding** complex problems, but in this case it is true, and the thoughtful believer knows this in his or her heart: There is no answer that will take away our grief or fully explain how a good God could permit this.*

Anyone who tells you that he or she has an answer to that question (for example: it is a punishment for our sins; it is the result of a vengeful

God; it proves there is no God; or it demonstrates meaninglessness in the universe) does not offer a real answer. For no answer will satisfy in the wake of such agony.

Yet, as a believer, I also need to say this: That it is a mystery does not mean that there aren't perspectives that can help the believing person in times of tragedy and sadness. For me, there are two things that have helped me in facing tragedy: First, as a Christian, I believe that violence, suffering and death are **never** the last word. God promises us eternal life, and will give us that life just as he gave it to his Son, who also died a violent death. "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them," is the prayer spoken at Catholic funerals. God, I believe, has already granted all those who were killed eternal rest and perpetual light.

This does not take away our sorrow, but it can offer us hope for those who have gone before us. It also offers us the hope of being reunited with our loved ones in the fullness of time.

The second thing, or person, I turn to is Jesus. We do not have a God who is removed from our sufferings. When Jesus went to the tomb of his good friend Lazarus, whom Jesus would soon raise from the dead, he wept. Why? Because he loved Lazarus, as he loved Lazarus's sisters, Mary and Martha. Jesus understands what sorrow is. Jesus understands

pain. Jesus, I believe, weeps with us. Our God is not an intellectual abstraction or a philosophical theory, ours is a God who has lived a human life. This helps me during times of sadness. Jesus is with us in our pain, not standing far off.

The two perspectives are really one. The God who weeps with us also promises us eternal life. And the God who promises us eternal life weeps with us.

For our part, we can work to end violence, to console those who remain and to build a more loving society. For those who are not Christian but who are believers, like my Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, I would not presume to offer a perspective, but I might still say that we all believe in a God who loves us, who is love, and who therefore weeps with us. On this we might begin to find some common understanding. For those who are not believers, I might say that in the wake of such horrendous tragedies, our hearts are called to compassion, to support the families and friends of the victims; and our sense of morality impels us to work for an end to such appalling violence.

There may not be answers that will satisfy, but for the believer there is God, who is sorrowful with us, who offers us eternal life, and who moves us, through our hearts, to build a more loving and compassionate society.

The Mystery of Evil

In the aftermath of the Connecticut horror, the word evil has reappeared in public discourse, but often without a clear understanding of what the word means. There are at least three ways of understanding evil, which is the most intractable mystery of the universe.

Historically, perhaps the earliest of these is dualism. The universe is divided into two kingdoms, one of good, the other of evil, which are perpetually at war with one another. Each is ruled by some kind of divinity, and the end of history will be the final separation of the two, when they will cease to have any relation to each other.

A second theory holds evil to be an illusion. Thus, the pain of physical suffering, of personal loss, of the frustration of one's desires, all evaporate if one cultivates the appropriate spirit of detachment. Evil is an illusion because the good of which it is a negation is itself an illusion. The goal of existence is to get beyond the possibility of desiring anything.

The third theory is the Christian idea that evil is nothingness. It differs from the first in that it does not concede evil an equal place with good and from the second because it affirms the goodness of the world, the loss of which is evil. It does not declare, for example, that losing a loved one is insignificant because human attachments are illusory. Rather, it affirms the

good of the universe and defines evil as the privation of that good. Death is evil because it is the loss of life, illness because it is the loss of health, adultery because it is the loss of love and trust.

Some Christians find this theory incredible but only, I suspect, because they have not bothered to think much about it. Theologians came to this view of evil because of their realization that an all-good God could not create evil; hence, evil cannot really exist. “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Some Christians misunderstand what is meant by calling evil “nothingness.” They fear that the concept will induce complacency in people who think they have nothing to be concerned about. But in the physical world the vacuum (or what physicists call “black holes”) show that nothingness is not without a perverse kind of power. So also, various kinds of deprivation—of food, water, air—are powerfully destructive, although the deprivations are not anything in themselves. Recognizing evil as nothingness need not make one complacent. The absence of food makes one anxious (and highly motivated to find food). One drives very carefully on a mountain road where the shoulder has disappeared.

The existence of the personal devil at first seems to contradict this. But the nature of Satan's evil is precisely that which he lost by his rebellion against God, by his great "No!" and he seeks to entice human beings into giving up these same goods. He has nothing real to offer. He traffics in illusions.

Hell—eternal punishment for evil—is primarily a state of profound loss, of ultimate nothingness. But it is also a place of eternal fire, something that exists only by consuming other things in its unceasing drive to reduce everything to nothing.

Christians today are ill-equipped to confront evil in its numerous forms precisely because they have lost this understanding of evil as negation. They cannot look into that black hole because it is too horrifying. They prefer to believe that what has traditionally been called evil (a word many would not even allow themselves to use) is merely a mistake, a failure of understanding, a misguided sense of good.

Thirty years ago there were experiments in recasting the Ten Commandments in "positive" forms—urging people to do good instead of forbidding them to do evil. The experiment failed for a number of reasons, not least because deep down most people do have an inchoate sense of

evil and realize that, for example, the injunction to “respect human life” does not get to the same reality as “thou shalt not kill.”

The mystery of evil lies in the fact that there is something in human nature (as in the angelic nature of Satan) that makes nothingness attractive, the moral equivalent of the urge some people feel, when standing atop a high building, to throw themselves off.