

**RCIA
GOD AND US
Session 4**

"The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He accomplished this work principally by the Paschal mystery of His blessed Passion, Resurrection from the dead, and glorious Ascension... For it was from the cross that there came forth the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church..."

**Catechism of the Catholic Church
(#1067)**



GOD AND US
THREE DISTINCT PERSONS – ONE GOD
How Roman Catholics begin our prayers

In The Name

OLD REVELATION: Understanding of God as seen in the Old Testament is a God named by the realities of daily life, i.e. God is our rock (Gn.49:24), God is our shepherd (Mi.7:14), God is the vine dresser (Is.5:1-7). No one had actually seen God. God was identified in relation to his own, i.e. Holy one of Israel, God of Jacob. It is God who chose to enter into dialogue with His people, through the patriarchs, prophets, judges, kings. God offered a covenant to the people but this involvement still remained a mystery to people.

NEW REVELATION: In the New Testament Jesus is the fullness of God revealing Himself to His people. (Jn.1:18) Jesus is the word of God. Through Jesus there is nothing more for God to reveal, everyone has complete access to God. (Eph.2:18,3,12). Jesus is the immediate presence, the embrace of God. Through Jesus is revealed God's plan for mankind. Jesus makes known all He has heard from the Father (Jn.15-15) and speaks in complete openness (Jn.16-25). Jesus reveals God's attitude toward the world – LOVE!! Jesus tells us God loves us with the same love He loves the Son, and makes us capable of loving Him with the same love the Son bears. God, through Jesus, makes us a gift of love that unites Father, Son, and Spirit. This is a mystery of unity and trinity. Who is God? – The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (rev.15:6, 2 Cor.11:31, Eph.1:3) How do people experience God? In the Spirit, in faith.

The NAME – In the Old Testament

Naming something, in ancient times had a great deal of significance. God names creation (Gen.1: 3-10 – day, night, heaven, earth, sea: Is.40:26 stars). In Gen.2:20 God commands Adam to name each created thing on earth. After the fall in the garden, God begins to make His presence known to man and desires to enter into relationship. God changes individual names and takes hold of one's being, takes possession or enters into relationship with the person. I.e. Abraham (Gen.17:5) or Jacob (Gen. 32:39).

As well, humanity names God, El/Elohim – name of God. As a name holds significant power God is also known as the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, or addressed by adjectives that describe human understanding of God i.e. the Strong One, Marvelous, Shaddai, or He of the Mountain.

As God continues to pursue man, God names Himself in many encounters with man. Moses asks by what God should be called and God responds I AM HE who IS. I AM who AM (Ex.3:13-16, 6:3). Also YAHWEH (3rd person: "HE IS who IS). This is an impenetrable name. In (1Sam.17:26, 36) we hear THE LIVING GOD, (Amos 4:2, Hos. 11:9) God is THE HOLY ONE. (Is.6:3) God is HOLY (Amos 2:7, Lv 20:3) God's name is HOLY. (Ex. 34:14) God is JEALOUS GOD. In all these names, God is OTHER, not like us. God is not flesh but spirit, holy (distant) but tender (near). God is understood at a most High God, but God-with-us, a powerful God, but with an option for the poor. God permits no image to be

made of Him, has no origin, no genealogy, no spouse, no sex. God is the ONLY GOD because the God of Israel is the only one able to save His people.

God reveals His name to be adored (Ex. 3-15) and makes clear there is no other before or after (Is.40-10). Israel avoids pronouncing the name of God because God's name is enough to designate God's presence. (Jud.7:9, Ez. 20:9) On account of God's name He acts on behalf of Israel. So out of fear and reverence, instead of using God's name he is addressed as *Elohim* or "My Lord" (Adonai or Kyrios – a Greek word.)

The NAME - In the New Testament

Naming is equally important in the time of Jesus. God instructs certain individuals to be named i.e. John & Jesus. God changes names of his followers Peter & Paul (Mt.16:18). In (Jn.10:3) God knows His flock by name and in (Lk. 10:20, Phi.4:5) the names of the elect are inscribed in heaven. God give Jesus a name above every other (Phil.2:9, Eph.1:20). Jesus name is not distinct from God, but participating in the mystery of God (rev.14.1, 22:3). Jesus is named Lord (Phil. 2:10, Rev. 19:13) and Son (Hebr.1:3, 5:5, Acts 13:33). Jesus reveals the Father's name to his disciples (Jn. 17:6, 26) and comes in the name of the Lord God (Mt.23:39, Jn. 12:13). God as Father expresses the essence of God and Jesus is the Son of the Father (Mt.11:25) and Jesus asks God to glorify His name (Jn.12:28).

Thus, the disciples heal (Acts 3:6, 9:34) cast out (Mk.9:38, 16,17) and do Miracles (Mt. 7:22) in Jesus' name. They also suffer (Acts 5:41, Rev. 2:3) were gathered in His name (Mt. 18:20), asked in His name (Jn. 14:13-14), prayer / addressed the Father in the name of the Son (Jn. 14:13-16) and were protected by the name of God (Jn. 17:11)

Furthermore, God name extends to all who believe in the Son (Jn. 20:17). Jesus calls His own by name and leads them (Jn. 10:3). Belief in the name of Jesus is necessary to have life (Jn. 3:17). We baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Mt. 28:19) Christians invoke the name of the Lord throughout the NT scriptures (Acts 9: 14, 21, 1Cor 1:2, Tim 2:22). All Christians have a duty to praise the name of God. (Heb. 13:15)

THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

We pray "In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen!"

The FATHER

We must again look at the emergence of our understanding of God the Father from both Old and New Testament views. In the Old Testament God called forth a UNIVERSAL Father in Abraham (Gen 12:3). God was a UNIQUE Father in that there is no sexual activity, no female association, no carnal son as other gods had. Yet God is a PROCREATOR in the moral sense, He is Father of all. God is a PROTECTOR in the Exodus experience as Father of Israel, His Chosen People.

Father in New Testament understanding is gained from the perspective of Jesus. Universal Father in NT means Father of Jesus as well as all peoples who believe in Jesus (Eph.3:6) (no Jew or Greek, circumcised or not, all one in faith).

God is the Unique Father of an ONLY SON, (Mt. 7:21, 11:27); (Lk. 2:49; 22:29). A REVEALED Father because the Son knows the Father and can reveal the Father to us (Jn. 14:7-9). The Father and Son have corresponding wills (Jn. 5:30), corresponding activities (Jn. 5:17-20), are equals (Jn.5:17, 10:33) are one (Jn. 17:11). In the NT we hear of Father as *Abba*, a PERSONAL Father and also that God is **our** Father through Baptism by being reborn according to faith, being made one with Christ, and becoming an adopted Child (Gal 3:26; 4:5; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5).

And THE SON (JESUS)

In the Old Testament God is uncreated, not part of time, space or history. There is no contact possible with God unless God chooses to reveal Himself through creation, time, history and the human's 5 senses. God as redeemer so loved His creation that in the fullness of time decided to reveal Himself fully to his creatures. God sent His divine Word, God 'incarnate'(made flesh) one like us yet true God, second person of the Trinity, conceived by the Spirit AND true human, born of Mary, to take a place in time and history. Jesus is God FOR US, "like us in all things but sin" (Jn. 1:1-4). The Word of God that reveals God's Self to his creation. Jesus is the MEDIATOR between the uncreated God and the world of creation.

The Council of Nicea (325) is the first of many councils that gives the Church a language to talk about Jesus. This council describes the relationship Jesus has with God "*One in being with the Father*" and dogmatically proclaims His divinity. The Council of Constantinople in 381 defines Jesus relationship to us. "*One like us – a rational human being with a soul, human*". Then in 431 the Council of Ephesus declares the relationship between human and divine and gives Mary a place of renown in the plan of redemption as the **Theotokos** (God Bearer, Mother of God). In response to many heresies the Council of Chalcedon in 451 declare that Jesus is true God and true Man, 1 person with 2 natures, the incarnate God.

JESUS OF HISTORY / CHRIST OF FAITH

The Jesus of history and the Christ of our faith are one person. Jesus had a ministry. He was sent. His mission was to announce the kingdom of God at hand but also to send His apostles and disciples to spread the Good News of the Kingdom. Jesus was killed, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven promising to come again in glory. Our knowledge of this comes through faith. We cannot prove or disprove these claims. Faith is based on the revelation or activity of God in creation, in human history through God's providence and relationships. Faith also comes through human words and Jesus is the Word of God come to visit His people. (Mt. 3:17 "*In the fullness of time – God sends His son*" & Jn. 1: 1-14 "*His word*").

Our knowledge of Jesus (**The ProclaimER**) comes through two sources, Christian and Non Christian. A faith 'biography' of Jesus is the 21 books of the New Testament, gospels and letters. These books contain detailed words and

acts of the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. They contain preaching about Jesus as one raised, Jesus the Christ. The Church today continues to reflect on this experience of Jesus.

There are a few non-Christian sources that prove Jesus was a person in history. Writings of Pliny the Younger, Tacitus letters are just a couple of the more common sources.

So what does this faith biography tell us of Jesus in history? Jesus was born of woman in historical time, in a known place with a culture, in a family. (Mt 1:18, Gal 4:4). He experienced stages of human growth and development. (Lk. 2:52). He was known as Jesus of Nazareth, a name from His town of birth (Lk 2:21 and 4:16) of the tribe of David, a Jewish identity from his human father, Joseph.(Lk. 1:27). Jesus was a practicing Palestine Jew who lived an obscure life as a carpenter for 30 years until after a public baptism He engaged in three years of public life as an itinerant preacher / teacher. (Mt. 4:12-17, Mt. 5:6, Lk. 17) Jesus' teaching method was by using parables.(Mt. 13: 1-9, 44-46, Lk 10: 29-37, Mk. 12:1-12) He was untrained theologically, but His words and acts demonstrated authority and earned His reputation as a Master. (Lk. 5:1-11, Mk. 2:1-12, 8:1-10, Jn. 2:1-11, 11:32-44). Jesus associated Himself with the marginalized and outcasts. He called a group of followers together who themselves were not socially elite.(Mk. 1:16-20, Lk. 12:12-16). In his teaching Jesus called God his Father (Abba). He died at a Passover time in Jerusalem by the cruelest method, crucifixion, as a result of criminal conviction as a blasphemer. (Lk. 14:43-52, Mt 27:11-14, Mk. 15:6-15, Jn. 18:19) Jesus was buried by followers but later his body was reported missing and they found only an empty tomb. (Mt. 27:33-44, Lk 23:50-56) There were unconfirmed reports by followers of appearances of Jesus for a short time after death and resurrection.

During His life the message Jesus proclaimed in word (parables) and deeds (great signs) was the Kingdom of God is now and coming. He made promises of a fulfillment of life, right relationship with God through forgiveness of sin. Jesus called followers to reform, to a change of life, turning from old creation and wrong relationships with God to a new way, "take up your cross and follow Me." Jesus confronted evil, sin, and suffering both individual and social, teaching themes of service, love and child-like intimacy with God. His mission was one sent by God to reveal God's plan as well as to send followers to share in His mission.

The Christ of Faith is not the proclaimer but the **proclaimed!** We believe that Jesus is alive. His disciples gave Him the names that are revealed only in faith – Christ (The Anointed one of God / Messiah.) The "faith biography" not only tell us who Jesus was as a person, it also tells us how the disciples "experienced" a risen Jesus. They had a gradual transforming realization over 40 days of multiple encounters that Jesus was the Christ. Their experiences in those days was characterized by "peace", "reconciliation", "solidarity in Spirit."

After the 40 days Jesus ascends from the disciples and promises to send His Spirit.

They still did not immediately respond. It was not until Jesus' Spirit descends on them that they could begin to proclaim, in Faith that Jesus was raised from the tomb, "He is Alive!" (Mt. 28:11-20, Mk 16:9-20, Lk 24:13-53, Jn 20:21, 1 Cor 15:3-8) Thereafter, they Proclaim Jesus is the Christ, He is one who is divine – the Son of God (Jn 1:1-14, Mt 16:16) Jesus is one who calls disciples into a union/solidarity with Himself and promises to send "another" (Jn 17). He is one who sends His followers to teach and baptize (Mt. 28:16-20, Jn 13:1-15, Mk 16:15-20) and one who is to come again (a Second Coming) in glory and in judgement.

The disciples proclaim what they hold most significant. They announce what they believe is most memorable and eventually they write accounts to be passed on so they will not be forgotten. The oldest New Testament scripture materials are the Passion/ Resurrection accounts.

There is no Jesus of History without the Christ of Faith; and no Christ of Faith without a Jesus of History. For Christians the Cross of Jesus is not an option for human salvation. He is not one among others like Mohammed, Buddha etc. Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to make disciples "other Christs" in the world, which is the Church. All the Baptized followers of Jesus reveal today "He is Alive!" So the question Jesus asked of his followers in Mt. 16:13-16 "*Who do you say that I am?*" is a question for modern days – for all time.

And the Holy Spirit, Amen!

Our understanding of God as sustainer – one who makes all things new, sanctifies, unifies) is God the Holy Spirit. This Trinity – God is one and three – has been understood since the birth of the Church. It is through the grace of God that we come to understand God as such. The earliest experiences of the Church worship and teach God as three distinct persons but one God. This understanding of unity and trinity is debated but it will always remain a mystery of Faith. The creed in which we profess God the Father, Son, and Spirit is not a blueprint but an expression of the Church's experience of God.

Scripture (the Bible) is the sole source of understanding the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament God creates and promises to re-create in Spirit. (Gn.1:2) the Spirit hovers over the abyss/chaos and creates. (Gn. 2:7) The Spirit breath distinguishes humanity in creation. (Gn. 8:10-12) the Spirit in the form of a dove indicates a new beginning for Noah, after the flood. (Is. 11:2) One is anointed in Spirit and in (Ez 37:1-14) Spirit transforms human life to a new creation. Joel 3:1-3 preaches the Spirit points to future and fulfillment of God's plan.

In the New Testament there are references to the Spirit outpouring, overshadowing, descending, breathing on. The Spirit is manifest in Jesus – all Jesus does is at God's initiative. His conception, baptism, being led into the desert are all initiated by the Spirit. In the synagogue Jesus reads a scroll and announces "the Spirit of God is upon me." Unlike John, Jesus will baptize in the

Spirit. On the Cross Jesus gives up His Spirit and is raised by the Father in Spirit. Jesus promises to send another - the Spirit / Advocate and breathes on His disciples saying 'receive the Spirit'. The Spirit role in baptism is to make a new creation born again in water and the Spirit. Jesus sends the Spirit at Pentecost to the disciples hiding in the upper room in fear. The dispirited disciples are "spirited" and sent, thus the Spirit gives birth to Church. The Church is a continuation of Christ's presence in Spirit. Disciples will baptize in Spirit and boldly witness in the Spirit. Church unity is in the Spirit – one body, one Spirit with many members. The Spirit builds up the body of Christ (the Church). The human person is a son or daughter of God in Spirit. All the "at one ment" is accomplished in Spirit.

Being baptized into the life of God's Holy Spirit the human person becomes a dwelling place of the triune God. God is part of me and I am a part of God. RCIA is a formation for life in Spirit and unity with the body of Christ, the Church.

God's Spirit is called by Jesus: Holy Spirit, Paraclete, The Spirit of Truth

God's Spirit was a PROMISE by Jesus

God's Spirit dwells within each person and is active in them.

God's Spirit sustains and guides the Church

God's Spirit prepares our hearts to receive God's messages.

God's Spirit inspires us, strengthens us in our choices for God's ways.

God's Spirit makes us holy.

God's Spirit renews our hope.

God's Spirit calls us to conversion.

God's Spirit bestows great gifts of character and spirit.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT:

Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear(awe) of the Lord.

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT:

Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-Control, Chastity.

Scripture References:

Old Testament – *Spirit* is a Hebrew word meaning breath or wind.

Genesis 1:2, 2:7, Psalm 104:30, Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, 61:1-2, Ezekiel 37:1-14

New Testament – *Spirit* permeates the existence and activity of Jesus

Luke 1:35, 4:1, 18-19, 36, Matthew 1:20, John 1: 33, 19:30, Romans 8:11

Disciples Sent / Church is the age of the "Spirit"

Acts 1:5, 8, 2:1-4, 14-39, 5:28, John 3:5-6, 7:39, 14:16, 20:21-23, Romans 8:9,
1 Corinthian 12:13